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January 1992
Number 19

FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

Despising Our Mothers, Despising Ourselves
Orania Papazoglou

Protestants and Natural Law
Carl E. Braaten

Writing Christian History
Robin Darling Young

Salman Rushdie Gets Religion
Alan Jacobs

Can Notre Dame Be Saved?
David W. Lutz

Also: Jakob J. Petuchowski on the Undoing of Reform Judaism
Moral Credibility After the Evil Empire • Marburg and Modernity
The Real John Dewey • The Catholic Church as Interest Group

Reviews and Opinion: Stanley Hauerwas on Robert Bellah et al.
Russell Hittinger • Ian Markham • Bonnie Shullenberger

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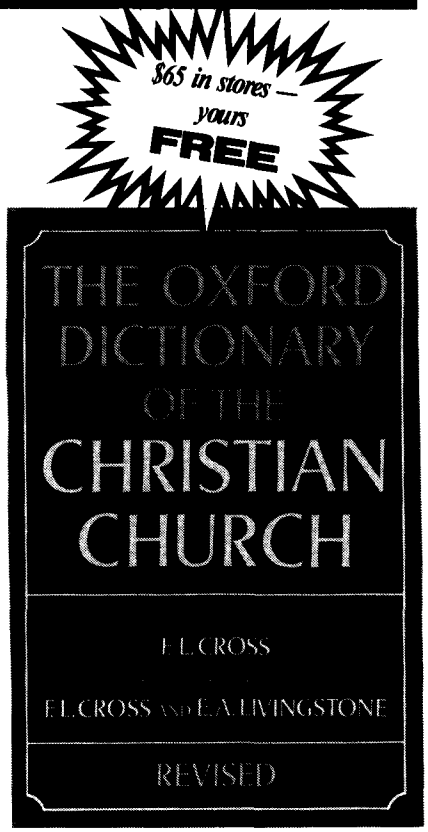

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FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

JANUARY 1992 • ISSUE 19

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"Talmudic"—Properly Understood

In his otherwise fine article, "Why the News Makes Us Dumb" (October 1991), John Sommerville writes, "Belief in the first amendment is not to be questioned. In fact, the faithful show their devotion by a hundred Talmudic expansions on that simple commandment." . . . In such usage "Talmudic" connotes a process of hairsplitting and constructing legal fictions far out of the context of the original text. It stems from the charge made by many Christians throughout history that Jewish tradition had distorted the true meaning of Scripture. Using "Talmudic" in such a connotation is similar to the use of "casuistical." . . . In fact, since the terms are often used interchangeably to suggest a rabbinic-scholastic type of exegetical slight of hand, it behooves both Jewish and Catholic scholars to remind even intellectuals that Talmudic reasoning which is quite casuistical and casuistical reasoning which is quite Talmudic are examples of profound human reasoning *when done properly*. Perhaps both forms of reasoning have gotten a bad name because Jewish rabbinics scholars and Catholic scholastics have often done them badly. Indeed, if Talmudic-casuistical reasoning is the attempt to expand the wisdom of Scripture and its traditions into contemporary situations—the "public square" if you will—then First Things and its authors should strive to be Talmudic casuists in the very best sense.

David Novak
Department of Religious Studies
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A Travesty and a Tragedy

The October issue of First Things included an article that posed the question, "What can be asked of a judge?"—the thrust being that the only question that should be put to a nominee for the Court is whether he understands and will be faithful to the Constitution that the Founders produced. It added, "All the rest is partisan smoke." How ironic that partisan smoke was already filling the stately theatre of the Senate Caucus room while this issue was being read by its subscribers. An American Tragedy was being played out as Judge Clarence Thomas was put on an unprecedented public trial in which he was made to defend his character and reputation against the allegations of a woman brought in at the eleventh hour to discredit him. As the drama unfolded, the world watched the cruel shattering of a decent man in a seventeenth-century Salem-like atmosphere, interrogated beyond human endurance while the world listened. The ending of the drama saw the confirmation of this honorable man, and perhaps in some way revealed qualities we may not have known about him—his sense of the moral, his forthrightness in facing the Senate, his courage in the face of his ordeal. But something in this process has left a wound on our nation just as if it left a wound on Judge Thomas. If we allow the process to go beyond the fundamental questions of whether a judge understands and will be faithful to the Constitution, then we are in grave danger of making a cruel mockery of the confirmation hearings, and discouraging good men from coming forward. . . .

Hortense Cupo
Staten Island, NY

Morality and Paternalism

I have read with interest Gerard Bradley's piece, "The Constitution and the Erotic Self" (October 1991). Not being trained in either law or philosophy, it is possible that I simply missed some of the nuances. So I will not engage in a dispute over constitutional law. But if I understand Mr. Bradley's basic premise correctly, the article illustrates a fundamental cleavage among conservatives (of whom I consider myself one). On the one side are conservatives like Mr. Bradley . . . who see a paternalistic role for government,

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and on the other persons like myself who fear strong government of any sort and want to keep its power strictly limited.

Most of us probably prefer to live in and be members of a moral society. But conservatives of my ilk worry that any government with the power to exercise a "paternalistic concern for the moral character of persons" will also be a government that can easily be tyrannical. Consequently, we wish a government with only such power as is absolutely required to maintain public order and protect life, limb, and property. The vital responsibility for teaching morals rests with the church as an institution parallel to, but wholly separated from, government, and the only moral responsibility of government is to assure that individuals live in a society where moral choices are possible.

To be sure, American government departs from my idea in many ways. With so many other interest groups looking to government to correct perceived wrongs and grant special favors, it is understandable that religious leaders would do so too. Unfortunately, too many of us want government to protect us from our own lapses and failures. Yet if many of us adopt the sexual mores of swine, it is not an indictment of government but of the church. The distressing failure of church leaders to accept responsibility for their own shortcomings as teachers is not cause for government intervention to suppress the erotic self, but for renewed effort by the church to be about its job of transforming that self into a new creature, saving souls the only way they can be saved, one by one.

James C. Hite
Clemson, SC

Applause, Applause

My heartiest applause goes to Jon D. Levenson for his essay "The God of Abraham and the Enemies of 'Eurocentrism' " (October 1991). He presents a strikingly complete synthesis of the apocalyptically dangerous assumptions that continue to undermine our Judeo-Christian heritage. He exposes the great demons of our age: the assertion of "superior" races, the denial of transcendent principles and objective discourse (including the myth of Eurocentrism), and the heinous excesses of modern feminism as but the three heads of one Hydra. My great fear is that while the theological ramifications and cultural expressions of the Jewish and Catholic traditions squabble, the beast slowly devours both the natural and adoptive children of Abraham.

God bless Professor Levenson for lessening my fears a little.

Thomas M. D'Alessandro
Sacred Heart Religious
Education Center
Rochelle Park, NJ

Jonah Fishing

I fish this bay all morning.
High clouds cap me, a light breeze
  tickles the water's skin.
Fall's green-brown leaves shade the shore.

By noon, no fish. I lean
  over the gunwale staring into the water.
I cannot see past my own reflection,
  rippled by clouds & salt.
I do not notice the water's spasm
  20 feet away—
not the quick bright splash of scup or blue,
but silent muscular surface turbulence,
  a ribbed intimation of mighty motion below.

The sky does not speak, nor the sea talk.
Mirrors, they breathe images
  in the cadenced wash of pure extension.

Face to face with our future,
  we cannot see the whale
  who will swallow us whole.

Bob Fauteaux

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FIRST THINGS
JANUARY 1992

Moral Credibility After the Evil Empire: The Witness of IRD

We are a month late in noting an anniversary that should not pass unnoted. 1981 witnessed the launching of the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD), a venture that was to profoundly shake and partially reshape the social postures of mainline/oldline Protestantism.

One might argue that IRD started in 1977 when David and Linda Jessup decided to send their children to Sunday School at Marvin Memorial United Methodist Church in Silver Spring, Md. They thought it more than a little odd when their children brought home lessons praising the Hanoi regime in Vietnam and cheering the great humanitarian achievements of Fidel Castro in Cuba. Jessup, a liberal labor organizer with the AFL-CIO, got in touch with Good News, the evangelical Methodist group, and that was followed by reaching out to concerned Christians in other churches, including George Weigel (now of the Ethics and Public Policy Center), Michael Novak (American Enterprise Institute), James V. Schall, S.J. (Georgetown University), and the Editor-in-Chief of this journal.

Under the early leadership of Penn Kemble—a (Scoop) Jackson liberal and key player in the Coalition for a Democratic Majority—IRD went public with its protest against the ideological drift of oldline Protestantism. There followed hard-hitting exposés by *Reader's Digest* and the CBS "60 Minutes" program, to which oldline bureaucracies, and the United Methodists in particular, reacted with a frenzy of counterattacks. The Methodists even hired "researchers" whose job it was, in George Weigel's terms, "to sketch, in lurid fashion, the web of political, denominational, and philanthropic connections that bound IRD's ecumenically disparate leadership together: an exercise that was one part House Un-American Activities Committee, and one part Laurel and Hardy." The oldline denominations and the National Council of Churches again and again drove home what they thought was the most damning indictment of the IRD and its leadership: "They are anti-Communists." About that they were certainly right.

Ten years later, when almost everybody says that there is nobody in the ecclesiastical chickencoop but us anti-Communists, it is hard to remember how powerful and pervasive was the commitment of the "church and society curia" to what they declared to be the global Marxist revolution against the capitalist imperialism of the West. It is hard to remember, but it is necessary to remember. Glenn Tinder, author of *The Political Meaning of Christianity*, has written: "I suggest that opponents of Marxism should be wary of the impulse to be generous in victory. For the most fundamental thing to be said about Marxism is that it is massively and profoundly wrong. Its being an immense historical misfortune is not accidental; it is an immense spiritual error. Marxism is a radical misinterpretation of the nature of human beings and their situation on earth. Summarily, the error is that human beings are tacitly deified." Marxism, in short, was and is idolatry.

Experiments in applied Marxism, so widely supported by the oldline churches, have claimed more than 100 million lives in the last seven decades. With a few notable exceptions, the evils of Communism were systematically belittled or denied by the executives of oldline Protestantism in this country. Especially from the 1960s onward, these people truly were, in the words of the IRD statement of purpose, "apologists for oppression." Most odiously, they belittled, denied, or even justified the massive persecution of Christians and other believers in this the century of martyrs.

In the sheer volume of murder and sundry crimes against humanity, Communism far exceeded the "achievement" of the Third Reich. After 1945 it was inconceivable that those who had served as apologists for Nazism would have maintained their positions of respectability and influence. Yet, in some of our churches and in other havens for the refugees from

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Marxist radicalisms past, people pretend that the defeat of Communism is no big deal. Business goes on as usual. The "Prophetic Justice Unit" of the National Council of Churches (yes, it really is called that) continues to grind out its screeds of indignation against the genocidal, racist, sexist, imperialistic depredations of the West. It continues to employ "Marxist analysis" in agitating for its version of a "just society."

A big difference is that today almost nobody pays attention. It is hard to remember that only ten years ago the National Council of Churches was still one of the major institutions of the American Establishment. It was up there with entitites such as the American Medical Association and Harvard University. A good many people, in the media at least, really did believe that the NCC "spoke for" upwards of 40 million American Protestants. In size and influence, it is now a wan shadow of its former self, chiefly receiving amused public notice when it outdoes itself in some new tirade of outrageousness, such as its condemnation of Christopher Columbus and all his works and ways.

The events of history have discredited the social witness of oldline Protestantism, and not least among those events was the relentless truth-telling of IRD. The leaders of IRD can take great satisfaction from the role that they have played. At the same time, IRD has not succeeded in its initial purpose of bringing the churches to repentance and amendment of life. The moral shambles of oldline leadership today is marked by embarrassment, confusion, and feeble self-justification. Perhaps this is a condition on the way to repentance and amendment of life, but there are few indications of that to date.

So the work of IRD continues. Ecumenically and through denominational renewal groups, IRD tirelessly and persuasively lays out the Christian basis for democratic society that is both free and virtuous. Dr. Kent Hill, now president of IRD, is leading the organization in providing help also to Christians working for democracy in the post-Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. This year, in a development that nobody could have anticipated a decade ago, Hill is teaching Christian apologetics on the faculty of the former Department of Atheism at Moscow State University.

IRD fought and continues to fight the good fight. Its 1981 manifesto began this way: "Jesus Christ is Lord. That is the first and final assertion Christians make about all of reality, including politics. Believers now assert by faith what one day will be manifest to the sight of all: every earthly sovereignty is subordinate to the sovereignty of Jesus Christ." That manifesto, updated in the light of the Revolution of 1989, concludes: "We cannot help but see the hand of God in this singular, nonviolent revolution. . . .We have met and prayed, wept and laughed, with many of the victims of Communist oppression on whose behalf we once worked. May their witness to Christian fidelity help renew the life of the Church in our country, as it helps renew the life of society in theirs. And yet, amidst the rejoicing, we also know that the victims of freedom's denial still number in the many millions. And we know that one day, before the judgment throne of God, those who were voiceless will ask what we said on their behalf. What we say or do may seem to be of little moment. But in the face of every discouragement we will persist in hope because finally, as we said at the start, Jesus Christ is Lord."

Ten years later, the Institute on Religion and Democracy emerges with high honor from a dark time when much of the Christian leadership in this country succumbed to mendacity, cowardice, and willful ignorance in refusing to speak the truth, and in deriding those who did speak the truth, about the most evil empire that, in a long history of evil, has ever afflicted the Church and the world. Is that anti-Communism? You bet it is. It is past time for those who were the anti-anti-Communists to explain themselves—especially to the victims of the evil that they belittled or denied.

There is no room in the Christian ethic for vindictiveness. The alternative to vindictiveness is not evasion but confession and forgiveness. For the sake of the truth and the moral integrity of the churches, Glenn Tinder's warning should be taken to heart: "Opponents of Marxism should be wary of the impulse to be generous in victory."

Opinion

Reform Judaism: Undone by Revival

Jakob J. Petuchowski

In the 1950s, only some forty years ago, the voice of rejoicing and salvation could be heard in the tents of the righteous. Religion in America was celebrating a great comeback. Billboards invited us to attend the church of our choice. "The family that prays together," we were informed, "stays together." A President of the United States called upon the nation to "have faith in faith." It belonged to the *bon ton* of good citizenship, it was indeed a prerequisite for escaping the suspicion that one harbored Communist sympathies, to be affiliated with one of the major religious denominations of America. In those days, the late Will Herberg published his noteworthy study in the sociology of religion, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew.* Herberg argued that, in order to be recognized as a good American, one had to belong to

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the American Religion, for that was the way in which Americans had learned to identify themselves. And that common American Religion was available in three equally recognized editions: a Protestant one, a Catholic one, and a Jewish one.

Judaism was, of course, part of the religious scene in those days; and it, too, reaped the benefits of the American "revival of faith." The move to the suburbs, in which Jews were heavily involved, led to the building of many new synagogues and temples. Jews who, while living in the inner city of New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles, might never have dreamed of belonging to any Jewish religious congregation, now experienced the kind of peer pressure that made them join in the building of suburban synagogues and temples. Some of them did not even need any peer pressure. However tenuous or nonexistent their own religious convictions might have been in the city, they did want their children to know something about their ancestral heritage. The only way this could be done in the suburbs was by joining a temple or synagogue, and by enrolling one's children in the Sunday and/or Hebrew School.

Obviously, the type of person we have in mind—the Labor Zionist or other Jewish secularist from way back—had a preference for the non-Orthodox type of synagogue or temple; and all kinds of factors entered into the decision-making about whether it was going to be a Conservative or a Reform one--although strictly *religious* considerations may not necessarily always have been in the forefront. The Reconstructionists were somewhat slow in getting themselves "established" in the suburbs; and, where they did, it was liable to be as informal "fellowships," meeting at first in private homes. Yet once they did get started, they exerted a natural influence on the Jewish secularists who sought some kind of Jewish affiliation. Most of the new affiliations, however, seem to have been with either Reform or Conservative suburban congregations.

And so, as noted above, the voice of rejoicing and salvation was heard in the tents of the righteous. The nonreligious Jew, whose parents might have attended the infamous "Yom Kippur Balls," which were held at the time when religious Jews attended *Kol Nidre* services on Atonement Eve; the ex-Orthodox Jew, who had become a Marxist while attending rabbinic school; the Reform Jew so "classical" that all that was left of Jewish observance was his annual attendance at the Memorial Service on the Day of Atonement (and that only out of filial piety); and the secular Zionist, who had always regarded the Jewish religion as nothing but a mechanism "to keep the Jewish nation alive in Exile," but as no longer needed now that the State of Israel had been created—they all swelled the ranks of Jewish congregations that had been founded with the avowed purpose of maintaining the Jewish *religion*. Obviously, the pious saw in this a great movement of "return" to the ancestral faith, and a rejection of the "substitute religions" that had, until then, attracted an ever-increasing number of Jews away from the Jewish religious *Weltanschauung*.

Whatever happened to the children of those secularist Jews, after their parents had joined religious congregations, where they, the children, attended Sunday School and/or Hebrew School? Well, some of those who were children then are now leading members of the congregations their parents had joined. Some are in positions of leadership in the national unions made up of various congregations. Some, and not an insignificant number of them, have even made it into the rabbinate. Apparently not a bad record—or is it?

The fact of the matter is that the secularist Jews who flocked to the synagogues and temples in the 1950s, far from seeking refuge there, as the old phrase has it, "under the wings of the *Shekhinah*," have simply taken over those religious bodies, and have made them over in their own image—helping by their very presence those already within the religious "establishment" who had all along aspired to a more secularist understanding of Judaism. As an ancient Roman once said in a somewhat different context: "The conquered have given the laws to the conquerors." Religious Jews in the fifties rejoiced too soon at the large influx of secularist Jews into the temples and synagogues. It is the temples and synagogues, not the secularists, that have been "captured."

The degrees of takeover vary from one wing of American Judaism to another. It is probably safe to assume that the least-affected synagogues are those of the Orthodox persuasion, since, in the fifties, the least number of Jewish secularists would have affiliated with Orthodox synagogues. By the same token, Reform Judaism, arguably the main recipient of the secularist influx, is today in the forefront of secularism in America, and is, in its official pronouncements, very often indistinguishable from the ACLU and the political left. It even maintains a leftist political lobby in Washington, D.C., camouflaging it under the name of "*Religious* Action Center." Conservative Judaism, by and large, still manages to hold the religious line; but even here voices are occasionally being heard in support of radical leftism in politics. Even here, one can come across an occasional argument in favor of homosexual clergy, or a substitution of sociology for theology in the exposition of Judaism. As for Reconstructionist Judaism, it came into existence in the 1930s, based on a denial of the existence of a personal and supernatural God and the denial of the election of Israel as God's covenant people. No wonder, then, that it has, of late, been vying with Reform Judaism in the championship of homosexuality and lesbianism in the clergy, in "innovative" and "nonsexist" liturgy, in adopting a definition of Jewish personal status that differs radically from the definition accepted by the rest of the world's religious Jews, and in identifying the religion of the Hebrew prophets with the latest demands of leftist politicians. But it is a *friendly* competition between Reform Judaism and Reconstructionist Judaism—so friendly, in fact, that Reconstructionist Judaism has recently been admitted to

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membership in the World Union for Progressive Judaism. That organization, founded in the 1920s as an umbrella organization for the world's liberal and Reform Jews, has, for the last few decades, been functioning as the "State Department" of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, i.e., the headquarters of *American* Reform Judaism.

There is also in existence an unabashedly atheistic form of "Judaism," sailing under the flag of "Humanistic Judaism." Efforts are currently being made by some highly placed Reform Jewish leaders to win membership in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations for the Cincinnati branch of that "Humanistic Judaism"—a body that came into existence when some members of Cincinnati's various Reform temples objected to the fact that *God* was worshipped in those temples.

When in the last century Felix Adler, the founder of the Society for Ethical Culture and an erstwhile candidate for the Reform rabbinate, discovered that his nontheistic views did not correspond to those of Reform Judaism—which, in those days, though weak on traditional observances, was very strong on Ethical Monotheism—he had the honesty and the decency to decline the position of rabbi at Manhattan's prestigious Temple Emanuel when it was offered to him. It may serve as an indication of the distance that Reform Judaism has traversed in the last one hundred years that today people of Felix Adler's way of thinking are not only urged to stay within (or to rejoin) the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, but they are even encouraged to enter the Reform seminary for the training of rabbis, where they will be duly ordained.

The fact of the matter is that Reform Judaism in America has, somewhere along the line, lost its religious moorings. (The condition of Reform Judaism in other parts of the world is not necessarily identical with that obtaining in the United States. But the financial dependence of Reform congregations elsewhere upon the largesse of American Reform Judaism makes their disavowal of American Reform policies and decisions somewhat muted.) Because American Reform Judaism no longer finds it necessary to justify itself before God and the Jewish religious tradition, its abject submissions—both lay and rabbinical—to any and all modern fads are boringly predictable. Tell me what is going to be on the agenda of the Biennial of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations or of a convention of Reform Judaism's Central Conference of American Rabbis, and I will tell you—even three years in advance—what the outcome of the voting is going to be.

It was not always so. There was a time within living memory when the Union of American Hebrew Congregations actually issued a pamphlet glorying in the influence that Jewish teachings purportedly exerted upon the founding of the American Republic. Today the leaders of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations are overjoyed at the fact that copies of the Ten Commandments have been torn off the walls of Kentucky public schools by court order. Those leaders (and innumerable paid officials) can also be counted on to make common cause with the ACLU and assorted atheists and secularists in fighting for the removal of the last vestiges of the presence of religion in American public life.

Their right to do so should, of course, not be curtailed. What, after all, is a free society for? But the time may well have come for the law about truth in advertising to be invoked. I recall one Sabbath some years back when I attended a Reform Jewish worship service. What the rabbi said in his sermon I have long since forgotten. But I shall probably always remember the big display in the temple's foyer, urging me to write to my Senator with the plea that he block the appointment of Judge Bork to the United States Supreme Court. Postcards for that purpose were supplied on the spot. So *this* is what Reform Judaism means by "the separation of Church and State," a cause that is so very much closer to its heart than some of the provisions in the eighteenth chapter of the Book of Leviticus.

Yet the incongruity lies in the nomenclature alone. The recent doings of American Reform Judaism cause surprise only if one assumes that American Reform Judaism is a *religious* denomination. Those doings do not cause any surprise at all the moment one realizes that, whatever may have been the goal that Reform Judaism set for itself in the nineteenth century, late-twentieth-century American Reform Judaism—in spite of some half-hearted attempts to retrieve a few traditional ceremonies that had been jettisoned in an earlier stage of Reform Judaism's development—is first and foremost a "Jewish" form of institutionalized secularism, the successor, as it were, of those Jewish groups of an earlier time that specialized in rejecting and fighting religion, not least the one they had inherited from their own ancestors. Among the substitute religions that those earlier groups put in the place of Judaism, a radical form of socialism figured rather prominently. And so it does in the activities of Reform Judaism's so-called "Religious" Action Center in our nation's capital.

For a while, in the fifties or later, religionists were able to gloat because of all those secularists who, in their thousands, had joined temples and synagogues. But it was, after all, only a Pyrrhic victory for the pious. The conquered have since succeeded in laying down the law to the conquerors.

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Marburg and Modernity

Peter J. Leithart

A history of the relation of sacramental theology and practice to Western intellectual and cultural history has yet to be written. The notion that such a history would be worth writing might seem quaint in our day, but there are hints that the enterprise would be a fruitful one.

What, for example, are we to make of the fact that David Hume began his treatise on miracles with a discussion of Scottish eucharistic doctrine? In the course of that treatise Hume claimed that miracles were impossible to prove, a maxim he applied even to the miracles of Jesus. Hume's skepticism about miracles (and the similar sentiments of his contemporaries) in turn helped launch the movement in biblical studies dedicated to discovering naturalistic explanations for the miracles recorded in the Gospels—a movement justly mocked by Albert Schweitzer. The relation between Hume's treatment of miracles and his understanding of sacramental theology is a question worth investigating.

The influence of sacramental theology on the course of European history was most directly apparent during the Reformation. The Reformers, after all, split largely over the question of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. At the Colloquy of Marburg in October 1529, the ecumenical efforts of the early Reformers came to an impasse from which Protestantism has never fully recovered. If Marburg had been nothing more than a rupture between Luther and Zwingli, it would have deserved at least honorable mention as a turning point in European history. The failure of the Reformation to form a unified international movement shaped the course of early modern social, political, and, of course, ecclesiastical history.

Yet the cultural significance of the Marburg Colloquy went beyond the splintering of the young Reformation. Edward Schillebeeckx has noted that differences of eucharistic doctrine are related to different conceptions of reality, an insight abundantly confirmed by the events at Marburg. Emphasizing the words of institution ("This is My Body"), Luther insisted that, though the elements of bread and wine were signs, they were signs that contained and communicated what they signified. Zwingli, by contrast, repeatedly quoted Jesus' statement that "the flesh profits nothing" (John 6:63), and insisted that the Supper could not be taken as a literal eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood. It is debatable whether Zwingli completely denied the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, but his tendency, and that of his followers, was to reduce the bread and wine to mere symbols.

Historian B. A. Gerrish has argued that Marburg was in essence a debate about the nature of religious symbols, and the relation of the symbolic and the real. In this respect, according to Indian scholar J. P. Singh Uberoi, Marburg not only splintered the Reformation, but began the splintering of the modern mind. In particular, Zwingli's insistence that the Eucharist was merely symbolic is the source of the "dualism or double monism" that Uberoi says is characteristic of the modern worldview: "Spirit, word, and sign had finally parted company at Marburg in 1529; and myth or ritual . . . was no longer literally *and* symbolically real and true. . . . Zwingli was the chief architect of the new schism and . . . Europe and the world followed Zwingli in the event. Zwingli, the reformer of Zurich, was in his system of thought the first philosopher . . . of the modern world."

The wider implications of this opposition of symbol and reality were described by Russian Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemann. Schmemann placed the rift earlier, arguing that the opposition of symbol and reality first appeared during the eleventh-century eucharistic disputes in the West, in which both sides, despite their antagonism, agreed on the basic point that symbol and reality were not only distinct, but fundamentally opposed to one another. One side contended that the sacrament contained the true body and blood of Christ, the other side insisted that the elements were only symbols of the body and blood. Both implicitly denied that the sacrament might involve both symbol *and* reality.

Patristic writers and many of the Reformers, by contrast, did not oppose symbol and reality, but claimed that Christ's flesh and blood were really communicated through the symbols of bread and wine. This view was rooted in the biblical doctrine of creation. According to the biblical conception, the entire creation reveals the Creator; reality is thus naturally and essentially symbolic of its Maker. Creation exists to reveal God to man, and to be a means of communion with him. As Schmemann explained, for the Church Fathers the sacrament was not a "miraculous exception to the natural order of things," but rather "reveals and fulfills the ultimate meaning and destiny of the world itself."

Rooted as it was in the doctrine of creation, patristic sacramental theology was able to hold together what Schmemann called the "three dimensions or levels of the Christian view of reality: those of the Church, the world, and the Kingdom." The world, though created good, is under judgment because of the sin of man. By his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus began to restore the creation, a process that will be consummated with the final coming of the Kingdom. The Eucharist, the Church's memorial of the death and resurrection of Jesus, celebrates the restored creation and points to its fulfillment in the Kingdom of God.

Once symbol and reality are opposed, once the sacrament is disconnected from the doctrine of creation, the unity of the world, the Church, and the

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Kingdom dissolves. The sacrament of the Church comes to be thought of as a miraculous intervention into an alien world, a supernatural event in a world that is governed according to mechanistic natural laws, an intrusion of the sacred in a profane world. Christianity involves the manipulation of comforting symbols, but "real life" is something entirely separate. The biblical claim that Christianity is the truth about the real world is lost, as is the Church's claim to be the firstfruits of a new creation.

The political correlate of this sacramental theology is that the state is a part of the "real world," the world that is separated from the Church. Church and state are entirely discontinuous institutions, each serving one side of schizophrenic modern man. Jefferson's "wall of separation" is political Zwinglianism. Operating with the patristic view of the Eucharist, by contrast, Armenian Orthodox ethicist Vigen Guroian concludes that "the political life is part of that material of the Kingdom which the Church must take within its own life, sanctify, and return to God."

The "dissociation of sensibility" initiated at Marburg continues to bear philosophical fruit as well. George Steiner has recently argued that the period from 1870 to 1930 marked a decisive turning point in the history of Western thought. During those decades Western intellectuals broke what Steiner calls the "covenant between the word and world." They came to doubt the ability of linguistic symbols to describe reality, a doubt that Steiner sees at the heart of the deconstructionist project. Again, this is simply Zwingli in linguistic guise.

If there is anything to these reflections, the implication seems to be that any Christian effort to respond to the breach within modern thought and culture would involve a revival of biblical sacramental theology and practice. In fact, even if there is nothing to these reflections, that would not be a bad thing to do.

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Trading Needles

Bonnie Shullenberger

It was the standard civil disobedience defense: they did it not for themselves, but in response to a condition of grave injustice and medical crisis. And last June 25 the court agreed, finding them not guilty due to what is called "necessity justification" in New York State penal law. Who are these bold marauders, selflessly risking jail for others? Why, members of ACT-UP, of course.

On March 6, 1991, they boldly and selflessly set up a table full of syringes at the corner of Essex and Delancy on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Boldly and selflessly, they had called the media to come and see them get arrested. Boldly and selflessly, they posed for the press outside the criminal courts building after their acquittal. Meanwhile, silently—and untouched by the police—ACT-UP has since March 6 continued to give needles to addicts in Harlem, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and on the Lower East Side.

In her ruling, Judge Laura Drager admitted that "the defendants' actions would not end the [AIDS] epidemic." That was the understatement of the week, since they hadn't given away a single syringe the day they were arrested: the entire enterprise was nothing but a media stunt. Nevertheless, the judge opined, "the harm the defendants sought to avoid was greater than the harm in violating the statute. Hundreds of thousands of lives are at stake in the AIDS epidemic." Finally, she pronounced the law against possessing hypodermic needles "of limited, if any, success in preventing illegal drug use."

But is needle-exchanging any use in preventing the spread of AIDS? On the surface, it looks easy: give addicts clean syringes, and they won't pass a needle around, which means they won't spread the virus. This assumes, of course, that junkies are careful and conscientious people (like us) who will naturally be grateful for this kindly assist in health management. However, an addict usually isn't a yuppie. An addict has three states of life: stoned, searching, and sick. A person with a moderate habit might use a personal needle if he scores in a not-too-desperate searching state. A broke, severely addicted person who's in a sick state isn't capable of caution. Say such a person is a young woman: she might have to have sex with the dealer and a couple of his buddies in order to get what she needs. (This is a frequently cited scenario in crack circles.) That's when safe sex and clean-needle programs are about as meaningful as dust.

Even though many people won't be helped by needle exchanges, some would argue the epidemic is so large and the risk so overwhelming that every possible point of attack ought to be used to try to save lives. There may be some merit in this argument, but it ignores the fact that drug addiction kills people, too. Keeping people addicted, albeit with clean needles, merely shifts the location of risk. Junkies get killed by dealers for not paying their debts; they get killed by other junkies for money or their stash; they overdose; they die of septicemia when their kidneys fail; they die of infections, seizures, and strokes; they die when they need emergency hospital care and the doctor can't find a vein for an IV or a blood transfusion. They are society's throwaway people, and they know it.

No one denies that there are not enough places in proven rehabilitation programs for all the people who are addicted. Motivated people who want to get clean have to linger for months until a slot opens. Once they're released, there is nowhere for them to go, in many cases, except to the same neighborhood and the same street

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corners where they spent years strung out. Furthermore, junkies are an unattractive, unstable lot. The likelihood that they would organize on their own for more and better treatment, and the likelihood that very many state officials would take them seriously if they did, is so small as to be unthinkable.

Yet addicts often have a certain clarity about their situation. Mary, a woman with a ten-year heroin habit who discovered she was HIV-positive two weeks before she was due to give birth for the third time, told me bluntly, "The day they legalize heroin, that's when we know they want us dead." Louie, a multiple-abuser who lived on the street in my Manhattan neighborhood, tried to hide his addiction from me. Finally I pointed out to him the six bags of sugar he put in his coffee. (Addicts tend to use enormous quantities of sugar in anything they can put it in; that's partly why so many have bad teeth.) He wept from shame.

These aren't romantic tales. Louie was also manipulative and mean: one time when I took him to a diner to buy him a sandwich and coffee, he tried to rob me. I laughed later when I discovered it, because instead of my wallet, he'd lifted my purse-size New Testament. Mary eventually got into rehab but only after nearly killing herself in a postpartum drug binge; only after she was clean and in a daily HIV support group could she begin to make arrangements to give her children up for adoption. One man whom I visited through a long recovery from a cardiac membrane infection, during which he detoxed, wound up DOA three weeks later from gunshot wounds. Most won't be saved, no matter what we do.

At best, needle exchange may help a handful of addicts. It won't do anything for crack addicts, and it won't stop the suburban teenagers who visit shooting galleries as a nouveau form of slumming. Like our limited rehab resources, clean needles assist only a motivated minority. Meanwhile, what's the message to the larger community?

What needle exchanges primarily do is allow the non-addicted to shrug off the need for intelligent drug enforcement and readily available detox and rehab programs. The policy of the day is a "give addicts clean needles and give teenagers all the condoms they want" plan. Why? Not because these things work (efficacy is the "big lie" of AIDS policy). Rather, the policy is promoted because it permits the privileged to imagine that they're doing something really useful for "those poor people"—whereas what they are in fact doing is helping the afflicted to stay stuck in destructive and degrading behaviors. In short, we give junkies clean needles and we give inner-city kids condoms because we really don't care about them as people. When as a matter of policy we give someone that which degrades him, we admit that we don't think he's as human or as important as we are.

And when the courts let fame junkies like ACT-UP rewrite the law to promote their own agenda and have the nerve to call it compassion, we are eyeball-to-eyeball with anarchy.

We as a nation have to care enough about the ruined humans who wander our streets in the throes of addiction to commit ourselves to fight the vultures who get rich off that misery. At the same time we have to provide plenty of opportunities for even the minimally motivated to find treatment. Finally, we have to begin to teach our children that enslavement takes many forms—drugs and sex are as cruel as the bondage slavery of centuries past. All I am saying, of course, is that it is necessary to restore serious ethical decision-making to our public discourse. Is that news? Will it bring out the press? No, but if ACT-UP had anything to do with it, I could probably get arrested for it.

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Despising Our Mothers, Despising Ourselves

Orania Papazoglou

Today's women are the victims of the second biggest con game in history. . . . The courts rip away our legal protection via "no-fault" divorce, nonexistent alimony, and joint custody. "Women's" magazines follow in the footsteps of Playboy *and* Hustler, *degrading us to the level of unpaid prostitutes by glamorizing uncommitted sex. Employers are losing their commitment to providing our husbands with a living wage, reasoning that we, their wives, can always get a job to make up the slack. Cigarette and alcohol manufacturers gleefully haul in big bucks from the exploding new women's market, while our cancer and alcoholism rates skyrocket. Community colleges everywhere are scrambling to cash in on the huge wave of "displaced homemakers," meaning women who have been ditched by their husbands and are now forced to earn bread and rent money. All in the name of Liberation.*

The passage I have just quoted is the first paragraph of a book called *The Way Home*, by Mary Pride. It was published in 1985, making it, as far as I know, the first of a new genre: the post-feminist anti-feminist tract. Mrs. Pride was once enough of a feminist to have studied the work of Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Reuther in some depth. She is now an evangelical Protestant arguing passionately in favor of the proposition that a woman's place is submissive to her husband. Taken alone, she would be interesting chiefly for the sharpness of her mind, the humor of her prose—and the completeness of her conversion.

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But Mary Pride cannot be taken alone. The past several years have been witness to a curious trend, a behind-the-scenes backward march almost never acknowledged in public. Every once in a while some woman who cannot be ignored will write a book whose message cannot be disguised—not only Maggie Gallagher's polemic *Eros and Civilization*, but also Alison Lurie's scathingly contemptuous anti-feminist novel, *The Truth About Lorin Jones*. Somewhat more frequently, a new-wave stay-at-home mother will be given space to vent her disaffection with the feminist ideal in *Newsweek* or *Time*. On the whole, however, the public perception has remained unchanged since the Carter administration: feminism is going to be triumphant because feminism is what women want. Armed with statistics, many of them specious, the National Organization for Women and its sisters have gone into the media fray to proclaim that We Cannot Turn Back the Clock and that The Legitimate Aspirations of Women wouldn't allow us to, anyway.

Just what those "legitimate aspirations" are, however, doesn't seem to be as clear—or as clearly feminist—as Molly Yard would like us to believe. Walk into any Waldenbooks and you will find them, filling up the self-help section and the new nonfiction racks, the fastest growing subgenre in the category of self-improvement: books on how to find a man, get him to marry you and stay married to you; books on decoding male speech and male expectations; books on how to become the kind of woman men really want. Never in the history of this country, not even in the domesticity-enraptured 1950s, have women been so obsessed with catching and keeping husbands. Never have they spent so much money, or tortured themselves so brutally, to satisfy the whims and caprices of men.

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After two decades of feminist gains in the workplace, the legislature, and the culture, every commonly recognized indicator points to the fact that the self-respect of American women is at an all-time low—and that their commitment to independence, autonomy, and self-justification is shrinking by the second. Cosmetic surgery is up, obsessive dieting is up, obsessive exercising is up. Sales of creams and lotions that claim they will prevent aging, sales of face powders and eye shadows that claim to be able to turn a plain face into Christie Brinkley's, sales of hair tints and nail polish and even eye-color-changing contact lenses are at an all-time high. Foot-torturing high heels are back in fashion. The chicest women's business suits are cleverly cut to look professional when a woman is standing still, but to flash a little leg when she walks. And in spite of all the statistics—on AIDS, rape, battering, and the rest—personals columns and singles bars are still doing a land-office business.

A further look through the stacks of nonfiction and self-help books is even more disconcerting. If titles and topics are anything to go by, once the woman of the 1990s has caught her man, her situation becomes not more, but less, secure. When Marabel Morgan published *The Total Woman* in 1973, the whole country laughed. Now books that are really nothing more than *The Total Woman* dressed up in respectably "psychological" language walk off the shelves at $19 to $22 a pop, and no one's laughing. As the manager of any chain store can tell you, these books sell primarily to "career woman types in suits." The fact that they frequently become hardcover best sellers tells you that they sell to a *lot* of career woman types in suits.

It is common feminist wisdom that the reason for all of this—the lack in women of the self-respect and sense of personal dignity to refuse to turn themselves into geishas—is, as Wendy Kaminer put it, "the intractability of sexual stereotypes and systemic discrimination." The problem with relying on this analysis, however, is that it won't wash historically. The New Woman of the nineties is a member of the first generation to have come of age during the American feminist dispensation. Unlike her mother and grandmother, she has been told almost from birth that her life can, and should, contain much more than marriage and a family. She is better and more expensively educated. She has a wider range of job opportunities and a better chance for promotion. She picks up legal, medical, business, scientific, and academic credentials at an unprecedented rate. Her access to birth control and abortion is absolute. There are a dozen organizations dedicated to fighting for her legal rights, defending her image as an independent and active human being, and supporting her through times of stress. She can do a thousand things her grandmother could not, from working as a bartender to getting a loan to start her own business. No, she does not live in a nonsexist society and no, she is not free as freedom has been envisaged by American feminists since Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. She is, however, freer. And if conventional feminist analysis is workable, she should also have more, not less, self-respect, and more, not less, independence of body and mind. The problem is, she doesn't.

To understand why she doesn't, we have to look at the fifties against which this wave of feminism was a reaction—or, perhaps more accurately, against which this wave of feminism was supposed to be a reaction. Our enduring myth of the fifties in America goes something like this: Once upon a time there was a great step forward for women, called the Second World War. During that time, the able young men of the country were drafted and sent to Europe to fight Hitler, leaving open their essential jobs in munitions factories and other vital services. When the government realized it had no spare men to fill these jobs, it decided to open them up to women instead, instituting subsidized programs for day care for their children and other workplace changes to make it easier for women to hold down men's jobs.

Then, when the war was over and the men were coming back, there was a great step backward. The jobs had been promised to the returning men. There was no place for the women any more. A great conspiracy was hatched, comprising not only government but the educational system, the arts, and even women's magazines, to force women to leave their work and retreat to their homes. The women resented this. Imprisoned in the suburban isolation of their postwar tract houses, they were bored and depressed and angry at being shut off from economic independence and self-affirming labor-market work. Still, the magazines and newspapers and television shows and movies kept putting out a stream of mind-numbing propaganda about the virtues of motherhood and the enviable state of the happy housewife. Society in general and men in particular valued the profession of wife and mother above all others for women. Women who were unhappy simply thought there was something wrong with them. Then Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, and when women read it they realized they'd been had. Energized by their anger, they abandoned their tract houses and moved purposefully and determinedly into the work force.

There are so many things wrong with this scenario one scarcely knows where to begin taking it apart. Yes, Rosie the Riveter was real—but she wasn't as large, vital, or competent a part of the American war economy as modern day feminists want to believe. And yes, the government was under a great deal of pressure to make good on its promise that the returning veterans would find their old jobs waiting for them—but it didn't have much opposition on that score. After all, the boys had just spent four years crawling through mud and getting shot at in a cause almost everyone in the country agreed was just. Nor were the Rosie the Riveters all that anxious to hold onto their jobs. Some

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of them were, but most of them knew something the National Organization for Women has never been able to understand. Most of the work done in this society, as in every society, is tedious, repetitive, tiring, and restrictive. The fact that it's also necessary doesn't help much.

It is important to remember that Friedan's analysis was directed at a particular kind of American woman in a particular kind of American place—to Smith girls in Westchester, not to high school graduates in Levittown. Friedan's neighbors may have been forced into motherhood by postwar propaganda, sidelined from intellectual pursuits by the cult of domesticity, but the Levittown mothers were not. Many of them were good Catholics in an era when being a good Catholic meant not only having, but wanting, a large family. The difference in the postwar era was that they could afford to bring these families up in relative safety and comfort.

They also had the support of both their government and their Church. They were secure, because the divorce laws in most states were still strict and divorce was therefore both expensive and uncommon. They were mostly unhampered by taxation. It is fashionable these days to say that the Carter and Reagan years were the death of the middle class, especially the lower middle class. Inflation, anti-union initiatives, and the sickly state of the manufacturing sector are supposed to have made the Levittown life a financial impossibility. But the median family income today, in constant dollars, is actually higher than it was in the fifties. It is higher even if the income of wives is excluded, and it has more than kept pace with inflation.

What hasn't kept pace with inflation is the dependent tax deduction, an oversight—deliberate or otherwise—in federal family policy the grievous effects of which have been compounded by the skyrocketing rates at which most people are expected to contribute to the Social Security system. At times during the postwar years, the top tax bracket in the United States reached 91 percent. It is now down to 33 percent, yet the middle-class family of four pays four times as many dollars in income taxes as it did in 1954. It pays 200 times as much in Social Security contributions. If the dependent tax deduction had been kept level with inflation, it would now stand at $6,684 per year per dependent child or stay-at-home wife. A family with a husband's median income of $28,250, a full time homemaker wife, and two children would pay no federal income tax at all. At 1954 rates, it would pay less than $425 in Social Security contributions, instead of (as now) more than $2,100. We used to tax the single and childless to insure good lives for our children. We now tax our children to insure good lives for the single and childless.

In housing, it was much the same. Except in a few pockets of extravagant affluence, like the Gold Coast of Connecticut and the more expensive suburbs of New York and Chicago, town zoning boards and administrative councils went out of their way to be hospitable to developers who promised to produce affordable housing in sufficient quantity to accommodate the hundreds of thousands of new families that were formed at the end of the war. Levittown and its counterparts came into existence not because of the greed of developers or the catatonia of town planning officials but because they solved an urgent problem: where to put all those people, and especially all those children. Now towns with as little claim to distinction as the small one in which I live routinely zone for exclusiveness. Building lots must be two acres or over, new houses must be 2,500 square feet or over—even roof pitch, color, and the number of bedrooms and baths are set in advance, all in the name of "preserving the character of the town" and making housing expensive. We used to swallow our aesthetic prejudices and our fear of change to insure that parents of children could afford to raise those children in decent places. Now we force children to grow up on the back streets of dangerous and decaying cities to insure that our aesthetic sensibilities are not offended, our fear of change is never activated, and our equity will keep rising by at least 10 percent a year.

The Church, too, played its part. She asked her members to accept large families as gifts from God, and then worked hard to make those gifts more affordable. Teaching sisters staffed the parish schools, charging little for their services and making it possible for a full third of the parishes in this country to offer a parochial school education to the children of their parishioners free of charge. Now that same parochial school education costs between $750 and $1,250 per child per year. Nursing sisters staffed the Catholic hospitals, also charging little for their services, making it possible for medical care to be offered to the indigent or near-indigent—or even to children in families that were a little hard up that month—at nominal or nonexistent fees. Now Catholic hospitals charge as much as secular ones and can be just as intransigent about refusing care to the uninsured.

In this, at any rate, the feminist analysis of the fifties zeitgeist is correct. We did value families in the fifties, especially families with children. We knew it was difficult and sometimes expensive to raise them, but we thought they were worth the sacrifices we had to make. Their welfare was more important than ours. To blame the plight of children today on lack of government-sponsored social services or cutbacks in Medicaid funding or a retreat from the commitment to the welfare state is naive and self-serving. The welfare state was much smaller in 1954, and Medicaid didn't exist. Most children were still far better off than most children are today. The plight of today's children can be blamed on one thing and one thing alone: we no longer care what happens to them.

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To understand how we got to here from there, it is necessary to explode another small segment of the myth of fifties America: the idea that it was a time when society in general and men in particular *valued* women in their roles as wives and mothers. The fifties may have been entranced with children, but it certainly was not entranced with wives and mothers, and it wasn't nearly as enraptured by marriage as we want to think. On the surface, it was the Decade of Togetherness. Underneath, it was the Decade of Divorce Reform.

At the end of the Second World War, fully forty states out of the then forty-eight refused to grant civil divorces on any grounds but adultery or desertion. Of the other eight, only Nevada allowed divorce for "irreconcilable differences." Almost all states made divorce as difficult and expensive as possible. Alimony awards were high and likely to last until the remarriage or death of the wife. Community property laws in some states gave a wife half of everything her husband owned at the time of the divorce and often half of everything he made thereafter, again until her remarriage or death. Most states mandated that, in addition to her alimony, a wife was entitled to her house and the custody of their children unless her husband could prove her to be grossly negligent or morally corrupt—not an easy thing to do in those days of few social workers, little social work ethic, and an assumption of the absolute right of people to privacy in their own homes. Government made divorce a bad deal for a man financially, and the rest of society made it a bad deal in every other way. Country clubs refused to accept divorced people as members or to retain them in membership. Businesses looked on divorced men with suspicion and slowed their rates of promotion—or simply refused to hire them in the first place. The Catholic Church's position on divorce was uncomplicated, uncluttered, and unbreachable: divorced and remarried Catholics were living in sin and unable to approach the sacraments. Annulments were seldom granted and even then only on limited grounds and only after elaborate investigations by skeptical clerics who wanted substantive proof of a contravention of the conditions necessary for a valid marriage. Psychological unfitness was rarely allowed as grounds unless one spouse or the other was a full-blown schizophrenic at the time of the wedding. If there was one thing these women did not have to worry about, it was that they were going to be traded in on a newer model.

In the fifties, all this began to change, slowly at first, but inexorably. The fact is, a great many American men of the fifties, especially middle-class American men, didn't like domesticity all that much, didn't like women all that much, and especially didn't like wives and mothers. If there is a coherent explanation for the drastic change in the divorce laws between 1960 and the present—a change so drastic that a wife may now be divorced not only without her consent, but, in some states, without her knowledge—it is found in the real, rather than the remembered, culture of the fifties. During the period we now think of as drunk on home and hearth, the American public was increasingly treated to images of Woman as Vampire. There was Momism—the image of Mother as a psychological devourer intent upon emasculating her husband and her sons. There was Bob Norman's "Miss Golddigger of 1953"—describing marriage as a racket in which women used sex to snare, trap, discard, and then bleed the idealistic young male. "Trapped," in fact, was the word American men most commonly used to describe their lives in the fifties. It surfaced in every poll, every survey, and every men's magazine right through the so-called decade of domesticity. Nor was it confined to adult men talking among themselves. Anyone who grew up in the years before 1968 can remember the endless harping in schools and homes, visited on daughters as well as sons, to "finish your education" and "not get trapped into marriage too soon." For men and women going on to elite colleges and universities, this propaganda was especially strong and especially unrelenting. "Marriage can ruin a man," our professors, mostly male and to an unusual degree either single or divorced, insistently told us. It isn't surprising that, as the decade drew to a close, even most women were beginning to think of marriage as "bad" for men and women as a species of rodent whose purpose in life was to suck the blood out of the male. Feminists say women were force-fed a self-image of stupidity and passivity in the fifties. I say we were force-fed a self-image of rapaciousness, viciousness, and social uselessness.

Still, as long as their marriages were stable, most women—Betty Friedan notwithstanding—were content to stay in them. For all the bad press women were getting, they had been left one socially useful function, and the most important one: the bearing and raising of children. Even without Dr. Spock and Berry Brazelton warning of the dangers of day care, most mothers felt their children belonged at home until they were ready to start school, and needed someone to be at home once school was over. Love, food, shelter, and a stable environment—that was what children needed. If being considered a cross between Dracula and a puppet was what you had to pay to get it for them, you paid it.

It is important to remember that the great modern phenomenon, the explosion of women into the workforce, is composed of two parts: young women graduating from college after years of being told that marriage is a "trap," and displaced homemakers forced out of their homes by "modern" divorce laws and "modern" financial settlements. The American housewife of the fifties didn't burst the bonds of her domesticity and escape into the unfettered world of the labor market shouting paeans to her strength and independence. She was dumped there, usually by a husband in search of younger women, fewer respon-

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sibilities, and uncommitted sex.

In the middle of all this, the Friedan book did offer some significant insights and complaints. America didn't value its women as much as it wanted them to think it did, and the changing divorce laws were making the position of wives and mothers more precarious by the year. Women deserved a better deal and a better press. On none of these points would there be an argument with her. The problem wasn't in Friedan's descriptions of suburban life—although they were applicable to far fewer women than she thought they were—but in what she decided had to be done about them. Millions of women now revere Betty Friedan as the woman who first rebelled at male domination and devaluation of women, but rebel was exactly what she didn't do. Not only did *The Feminine Mystique* not challenge the American male's negative picture of the nature of women, it *ratified* it.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the extent to which Friedan held the American woman in contempt. No male supremacist in the country could have outdone her. Housewives were being portrayed as empty-headed nitwits in frilly aprons causing nonsensical panic to their husbands and sons? Well, according to Friedan, the entire occupation of American wife and mother consisted of "tasks for feeble-minded girls and eight-year-olds." The American mother was really a vampire, devouring her husband and sons? According to Friedan, "we have gone on too long blaming or pitying the mothers who devour their children, who sow the seeds of progressive dehumanization, because they have never grown to full humanity themselves." Marriage suburb-style was no better than legalized gold digging? To Friedan, in a supposed "insight" that would permeate the American women's rights movement forever after, it was no better than prostitution.

From beginning to end, *The Feminine Mystique* was an unrelenting attack on women's work—on home-making, motherhood, teaching, nursing, secretarial work, and all the rest. At no point did Friedan challenge the predominant male assumption that any work women engaged in must be intellectually unsatisfying, professionally unrigorous, and socially marginal. In fact, she went out of her way to confirm it. She turned her biggest guns on what would later be called "the secret life of the American wife," claiming it to be exactly what men had always thought it was, except less joyful. "It is urgent," she said, "to understand how the very condition of being a housewife can create a sense of emptiness, non-existence, nothingness in women. There are aspects of the housewife role that make it almost impossible for a woman of adult intelligence to retain a sense of human identity, the firm core of self or 'I' without which a human being, man or woman, is not truly alive. For women of ability, in America today, I am convinced there is something about the housewife state itself that is dangerous."

Betty Friedan came to be seen as a champion of women not because she defended them, but because, contrary to the prevailing wisdom of her day, she insisted on nurture rather than nature as the cause of their inferiority. If American women were passive, trivial, rapacious, and smug, it wasn't because of hormones, as the natural scientists thought, or psychosexual inevitability, as the ascendant Freudians thought, but simply because they'd been brought up that way. If they were brought up differently, they would be different—more like men. If they put their minds to it, got out of their houses and got themselves sensible jobs, they could make themselves different, right away. An independent career outside the home was the psychic wonder drug that would abolish manic depression, compulsive overeating, and the housemaid's knee, all in a single dose.

II

Betty Friedan addressed *The Feminine Mystique* to other women like herself, to upper-middle-class women with degrees from Seven Sisters colleges who were now "stuck" in suburbia. Some of these women even listened to her and took her to heart—although, again, probably fewer of them than anyone wanted to believe. Friedan did, however, have a natural audience—not my mother, but me. Like most middle-class young women coming of age in the baby-boom generation, I had been fed for years on admonitions to "finish my education," "not get married too young," "not get tied down too early." The official line was that marriage and motherhood were wonderful things, the greatest fulfillment in the world—but that official line was delivered with all the sincerity of a KGB officer pontificating on the wonders of due process. Like Mary Pride, I spent most of my late childhood and early adolescence fascinated by a monthly column in one of the largest and most prestigious of women's magazines, a column called "Can This Marriage Be Saved?" The subtext was not reassuring. By the time I was ten years old, I had figured out that being "just a housewife" got you no respect.

The women of my generation would have benefited from a defense of women, but we didn't get one. What we did get was the promise that we didn't have to be anything like those terrifying second-class, tenth-rate people, our mothers. If my high school graduating class had been honest when they answered that question about "goals and ambitions" for the yearbook, they would have left out all the nonsense about becoming computer programmers and doctors and artists and just put, one after another, "to be nothing at all like my mother."

From the beginning, this new wave of American feminism has been a revolt not against men, but against mothers, with devastating consequences. The force of this revolt nearly wrecked the movement at its beginnings. Headline-grabbing radical reactionaries like the

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Society for Cutting Up Men (SCUM) and the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell (WITCH) did nothing to reassure the American public that baby-boom women were ready to run General Motors or get elected to the White House. The emergence of "political lesbians"—women who were not actually lesbians, but decided to become lesbians in order to "assert their feminism"—confused the rest of us more than they actually managed to assert anything. Shulamith Firestone's and Redstockings' demands for "reproductive technology" that would free *everyone* from pregnancy were not only bizarre, but more than a little repugnant. This was not what most of us were looking for. We were much more comfortable with the National Organization for Women. If it seemed to be having its own troubles with principles of organization and a radical wing close to out of control, at least it affirmed our desire for "real" careers and gave us an excuse to drop out of our consciousness-raising groups, which by then were mainly raising our consciousnesses about how annoying it was to have to spend a lot of forced faked intimate time with women we didn't really like very much.

And yet, mainstream feminism had more in common with the radical kind than we were willing to admit. Both wings of the movement took the position that marriage was death—the mainstream just put it more politely. *They* had Jill Johnston's *Lesbian Nation*. *We* had Kathrin Perutz's *Marriage Is Hell*, although with reservations. On motherhood, we were equally negative and equally doctrinaire. The radicals wanted to breed in test tubes, according to the prescriptions offered in Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*. We didn't want to breed at all, as per Ellen Peck's *The Baby Trap*. To a woman, we agreed with Juliet Mitchell's *Woman's Estate* that "women with families [were] inclined to small-mindedness, petty jealousy, irrational emotionality and random violence, dependence, competitive selfishness and possessiveness, passivity, a lack of vision and conservatism." So spoke the feminism we had embraced and claimed as our liberation—a feminism deemed "feminist" by virtue of its hatred of women.

What is so frustrating, looking back on all this, is how unnecessary and destructive it all was. American women in the fifties needed feminism, real feminism, feminism that would embrace both its career women and its career mothers. Bright women who honestly wanted and needed to work in the professions were being foiled at every turn. Heroic women who had dedicated their lives to the welfare and education of children—as mothers, teachers, nurses, social workers—were being systematically marginalized and devalued, made to feel stupid and second rate because they had taken seriously the Judeo-Christian precept that it was better to do for others than for oneself. A real feminism would have affirmed them both, searched for ways to allow each to be more secure and more valued in what she had chosen to do. Instead, the false feminism we got declared war on mothers.

"Declaring war" may sound like hyperbole. I don't think it is, and I don't think the war is over, either. According to Shulamith Firestone, pregnancy is "the temporary deformation of the body of the individual for the sake of the species." According to one of the women in Ann Dally's *Inventing Motherhood*, raising an infant is "spending all day, every day, in the company of an incontinent mental defective." According to Betty Friedan, the women of *The Feminine Mystique* had "a sad, sick love affair with their own children."

Before we could really go to war against mothers, though, we had to go to war against wives, and we did. In one state after another, local chapters of the National Organization for Women went to bat for no-fault divorce laws, "equitable" divisions of property, and co-custody provisions. A hundred years after the first wave of American feminists had won the right of divorcing mothers to their children, American wives were once again faced with the threat of losing them in divorce actions—a threat that could be, and was, used by abusive husbands to keep battered wives in their marriages. By 1987, a woman could be divorced without her consent in forty-five states. "Equitable" division of property hasn't been a magic charm for women, either. It almost always went along with the abolition of alimony, which the mainstream women's movement found demeaning in any case. Instead, women are awarded "maintenance" for a few years—usually two to five—until they can "train for the job market" and "get on their feet." Exactly what the average displaced homemaker—described by Sylvia Ann Hewlett in *A Lesser Life* as a woman who is "fifty-two years old and who has invested two to three decades in her home and family"—is supposed to train for that will give her anything like a living wage, nobody knows. And yet, as Hewlett reports, by the mid-seventies in the state of California "only 15 to 17 percent of divorce cases . . . involved alimony payments . . . to the ex-wife; the amount of money involved in these payments was modest (median award $209 a month); and in only a third of these cases was the alimony award open-ended (until death or remarriage). Indeed, two-thirds of the awards had a median duration of less than three years."

It's no wonder that these days a husband's income rises 42 percent in the wake of a divorce, while that of his wife and children falls by 73 percent.

The colossal indifference of the mainstream feminist organizations throughout the seventies to the misery caused by all this liberation is staggering. I once asked a woman I knew, head of what was then called the New York Legal Caucus and an ardent campaigner for no-fault divorce in New York State, how all this could possibly be "good for women." "It's good for women," she told me, "because it

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discourages dependence. As long as women can take the easy way out and just get married, they will, and as long as they do, we'll never have real equality."

What this woman was saying, of course, was that *she* would never feel comfortable about her own pursuit of equality as long as even a minority of the women in the country were not pursuing it her way. What she was saying was that it was worth any amount of other people's pain to establish her personal vision of a brave new world.

In public, of course, women's rights organizations never admitted that "if women can take the easy way out and just get married, they will." Official feminist strategy was to pretend that every woman in America wanted to get out of the "confines" of her home and hit the workplace. And if she didn't—she should. Being a full time wife and mother was suffocating her, whether she realized it or not. All this pain and suffering was for her own good.

About this time, women's rights organizations began to use a number of tactics to reinforce their position, to turn their mythological vision of American women into the next best thing to fact—namely, into what politicians would think of as fact. Chief among these was a statistic, put out by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, that said, "56 percent of all women with children under six are in the labor force."

It was a lovely statistic, made lovelier by the fact that its particulars were buried in a report an inch and a half thick that no one was ever likely to read. Women's organizations presented this statistic as if it actually said what it seemed to say—that the majority of women with children under six were now striding out every morning to a nine-to-five job.

Anyone who bothered to look up the details, however, got a different picture. For one thing, the Bureau of Labor Statistics defined being "in the labor force" as working for pay as little as one hour a week. Counted also as being "in the labor force" were women who worked at home and in family businesses, like small stores and restaurants, where they could bring their children with them. Then there were the "seasonals"—women who picked up extra money at Christmas or during the harvest season, but didn't work at all during the rest of the year. Of married women living with their husbands and having children under the age of six, only 35.6 percent are employed full-time. Of married women living with their husbands and having children under three, only 33.7 percent are working full time. Among them are numbered many women like me, who work at home and see their children as often and as regularly as any full-time mother.

This false image of women in the work force was bad enough as it stood, but the mainstream feminist organizations made it worse by propagating the view that even though most women worked because they "had" to, they also worked because they "wanted" to. Having swallowed the definition of full-time motherhood as confining, suffocating, and unrewarding, they assumed that every other woman had swallowed it, too—or ought to have. At any rate, the women who hadn't accepted this view didn't count. They were Barbie dolls, unglamorous, unempowered, unthreatening. We could forget all about them.

This misrepresentation of women's lives and devaluation of any dissenting opinion, coupled with a straightforward plea to American ideals of fairness and political equality, seemed to be working beautifully. Between October of 1971 and March of 1972, the women's movement had managed to do something the first wave of American feminism had failed to do after fifty years of effort—get an Equal Rights Amendment through the United States Congress. The House of Representatives passed it by a vote of 354 to 23. The Senate passed it 84 to 8. A year later, thirty states had ratified the amendment and there were only eight more to go.

Maybe the National Organization for Women and all its sister organizations had begun to believe their own publicity. Maybe they had forgotten that it was image they were orchestrating, not facts they were presenting, when they drew their media picture of a feminist America. Whatever the reason, between 1973 and 1979, they got the shock of their lives. It was bad enough that the ERA was not ratified. They had every reason to think it would be. They had played the male political game as well as it could be played, they had worked themselves into exhaustion, they had a right to expect their reward—success.

What made the defeat of the ERA really awful was that it was defeated by women.

III

I have never met Phyllis Schlafly. I have never heard her speak. I have seen her publication once or twice, and it seemed to me to be crudely put together and intellectually unsubtle. The woman fascinates me nonetheless. At one point in the STOP ERA campaign, it was said that she could get a thousand protesters to the steps of any state capital anywhere in the country in under an hour, and ten thousand letters into the mailbox of any Washington official in three days. Whatever Phyllis Schlafly is, she isn't what the organized women's movement portrayed her to be all through the days of the fight for ERA. She is not a Barbie doll, a fool, a frump, or an idiot. She has a genius for political organization, and she isn't "passive" about using it.

The feminist movement found STOP ERA frightening not because they took it seriously—at least not in the beginning—but because everything they believed in said it was impossible. Rumors floated through feminist circles that Schlafly was a front for her husband, or organized business interests, or Ronald Reagan, or conservative politicians, or the CIA—at any rate, for some man. Other rumors floated about secret funding from rich industrialist and right-wing

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terrorist organizations and fundamentalist churches. To the end, feminists refused to accept that they were seeing what they were seeing—a traditional housewife fighting to be allowed to remain a traditional housewife, backed up by tens of thousands of other traditional housewives with the same thing on their minds. Schlafly ran STOP ERA out of her own home, with no paid staff. She was opposed by Presidents and movie stars with plenty of money to throw around and easy access to the national media. She won anyway.

It really shouldn't have come as such a shock. American feminism had been hacking away at the already low status of traditional wives and mothers since *The Feminine Mystique*. It hadn't made any allies in that quarter. Its support of no-fault divorce, joint custody, and "equitable" division of property had weakened the financial security of the women who took motherhood seriously and wanted to practice it full time. To these women, feminists looked like the allies of wayward husbands, not women. What Phyllis Schlafly did was to convince them of something they already believed, but may not have been able to put into words: *without* the ERA, it was possible that they would someday retrieve the rights of women in marriage, if not for themselves at least for their daughters. With the ERA, that would be impossible.

There were a lot of other issues, of course, hot-button issues for liberals and conservatives—the ERA would mandate the drafting of women and sending them into combat; the ERA would amount to a constitutional amendment in favor of abortion on demand; the ERA would end social welfare programs that did not apply as equally to men as to women, like Aid to Families with Dependent Children. The laundry list went on and on, but the core of it was always this: traditional women saw feminists as the enemy of what they valued most, motherhood.

NOW and its sister organizations had spent so much time talking about the family as a prison, children as a trap, and birth control and abortion as the only way a woman could really be "free" to do "serious work," they'd failed to notice something: as the baby-boom women began to age, they also began to marry and to have children, and once they had children they began to change their minds about a lot of things.

Chief among the things new mothers changed their minds about was the relative importance of work and family. Single and childless women consistently put career first. Mothers almost invariably put family first—the most striking thing about *The Motherhood Report*, a mostly anecdotal collection of women's views on motherhood whose authors try desperately to affirm the feminist myth in the face of interviews that contravene it at every turn, is how many of the working mothers of young children long to quit and stay home with the children. Some are prevented by finances, others by their fear that the feminists will turn out to be right and motherhood will be a trap, others by fear of the future—with the unstable state of marriage, what will they do if their husbands leave? Almost all these mothers, working or not, resent the feminist movement heartily for putting them in a bind.

They aren't the only ones. As the 1980s got under way in earnest, there began to be some unpleasant rumblings from those bastions of feminist recruitment, the colleges and universities. The news wasn't all bad. In 1990, the graduating class of Wellesley college could object to the presence of Barbara Bush as a commencement speaker because she'd spent her life "seeking her identity through her husband." Still, the news wasn't all good, either. Reporters sent to campuses to interview the new crop of women came back with too many of the wrong quotes. "I'd never be a feminist," a young woman told the *New York Times*. "My mother was a feminist. She was never home. I'm going to be home for my children." "You can't say you're a feminist on this campus," another said, "because then everybody assumes you're a lesbian. I mean, most of the feminists are." And the cruelest blow of all, from a young woman climbing the corporate ladder at a large publishing house, the new-age beneficiary of a decade of feminist agitation in the work place, "The way I see it is, feminists are bitter, angry women who end up alone."

Finally, and most painfully, there were the rumblings from the women who had once been allies, the brave new career women of the sixties generation. Some of them were furious. After all, they'd been told they could have it all—and they couldn't. Feminism had lied to them.

Thus it was that in the wake of the defeat of the ERA and the growth of the prolife movement, many feminist organizations, especially the National Organization for Women, woke up to "family issues." I would like to say that was a hopeful sign. The Lord only knows, we need some constructive thinking about family issues.

All indications, however, are that nothing much has changed, except the rhetoric. Not a single one of the major mainstream feminist organizations is willing to consider marriage and motherhood as anything but a problem. Not one of them is interested in helping women who want to make that choice pursue it in dignity. Everyone wants to make that choice a near or total impossibility. Being "just a housewife" still gets you no respect, especially from feminists.

NOW has changed its thinking on no-fault divorce—probably because it was an issue they either had to change their minds on or be killed by—but it hasn't about its opposition to making it "comfortable to stay home," as one woman working to "reform" the dependent widow's pension out of the Social Security system put it. In fact, their policy has been to resist anything and everything that might make it possible for women to stay home. NOW, the Women's Research and Education Institute, the Women's Equity Action League, and the Congressional Caucus for Women's

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Issues have all supported child-care initiatives intended to fund full-day care centers with public money, but opposed voucher systems that would allow women to choose to use that money to pay for day care or to bridge the financial gap that may force them into a work force they don't want to enter. For a movement dedicated so stridently to choice, they are remarkably selective in the choices they are willing to allow other women to make. All four of these organizations and a host of others have been active in legislative initiatives intended to restrict the viability of home work—contracting, freelancing, consulting, and other off-site contract work that many women find the most compatible with their need to be with their young children. Even the Act for Better Child Care was intended at least partially to strike at the most common form of women's home business, the in-family day-care center. They have been active, too, against attempts to raise the dependent deduction for the federal income tax and against most serious attempts to retighten the divorce laws. As they once ignored the forces that first opposed and then derailed the ERA, they now ignore the forces that have begun to array against their two most cherished contemporary initiatives: federally funded day care and comparable-worth salaries. It would be worth their while to pay attention, in the case of day care, because what's happening on that front looks very much like the groundswell of anger that Phyllis Schlafly tapped. Last year, when a women's magazine ran an article on the ABC, advising stay-at-home mothers to make "common cause" with their working sisters in the interests of "choice," it received what even it admitted to be an avalanche of mail from furious women convinced that ABC was nothing more than a plot to force them out of their homes and away from their children.

As for comparable worth, it rests on a very shaky assumption, and that is that if we pay more for something, we will inevitably value it more. The better-paid an occupation is, this theory goes, the more respect and power it commands. But consider this: the starting salary for nurses in Westchester County is $37,500 a year. Benefits from day of hire include full medical and dental care, two weeks paid vacation, contributions to a life insurance policy and a pension that provides a nurse after twenty years' service with 80 percent of her salary rate in her last year of full-time employment for the rest of her life. Across the state line, in Connecticut, starting salaries for new hires at a major publisher of children's books are between $13,500 and $17,500 a year for women with B.A. degrees. After several years' service and three or four promotions to senior editor, that salary will increase to $26,500 a year. Benefits include medical and dental insurance for which employees must contribute 30 percent, no life insurance, and a pension plan that will provide an editor after twenty years' service with approximately a fifth of her last year's salary. Vacations are limited to five paid days for the first two years. Afterwards, they are limited to ten. If salary and benefits really mean anything, nursing should be a much more attractive career than publishing.

And yet, year after year, bright young women with degrees from Ivy League and Seven Sisters colleges go to work for that publishing company, and stay on. The nurses are drawn primarily from graduates of state colleges and hospital nursing schools, from young women who were graduated several rungs below their Ivy League sisters on the high school educational ladder. As everyone knows, publishing is a "glamorous" profession. Tell a man at a party that you're an assistant editor, and he will be impressed. Tell him you're a nurse, and he'll simply assume you're low-rent. The *best* women don't go into nursing.

It's no wonder that the new woman of the nineties has no self-respect. You cannot devalue motherhood without devaluing everything else women do. You cannot declare the primary work of most women throughout most of history to be beneath serious consideration without sending women the covert message that it is really women who are beneath serious consideration. You cannot train a whole generation of women in contempt for their mothers without training them in contempt for themselves. You cannot pronounce the lives of millions of women over thousands of years to be wasted without making women suspect that their lives will be wasted no matter what they do.

The New Woman of the nineties didn't need a society full of sexist men to make her believe she was worth nothing. She had the new wave of American feminism to do it for them—and, in the meantime, to provide them with ammunition. "Why," the senior senator from my state asked, when pressed to support a bill that would have eased the tax burden on women at home with children, "should I support a lot of women who aren't contributing anything to society?"

Of course the "best" women don't want to be nurses—and even the third-best women don't want to be child-care workers, in their homes or out. All that sort of thing is "women's work"—and as men have been telling us since time immemorial, and the feminist movement has been telling us for the last twenty-five years, women's work isn't worth anything. ☐

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Protestants and Natural Law

Carl E. Braaten

It is a longstanding commonplace in Christian thought that Protestantism distinguishes its moral theology from that of Roman Catholicism by its rejection of natural law. The idea of natural law has long formed the spinal column of Catholic social teaching. Modern Protestantism, by contrast, has no comparable coherent framework for grounding its social thought. As long as ago as 1891, on the occasion of the publication of one of the great documents of Catholic social teaching, *Rerum Novarum*, the Dutch Reformed theologian Abraham Kuyper conceded the Protestant disadvantage: "It must be admitted to our shame that the Roman Catholics are far ahead of us in their study of the social question. Indeed, very far ahead. . . . The action of the Roman Catholics should spur us Protestants to show more dynamism. . . . The Encyclical of Leo XIII gives the principles which are common to all Christians, and which we share with our Roman Catholic compatriots."

The idea of natural law embodied in *Rerum Novarum* assumes that there is a universal law to which people of all races, classes, cultures, and religions have access by their natural reason. Natural law thus serves as a bridge category on ethical and social questions between church and world, between those with *a priori* commitment to sacred Scripture and the Christian creed and those outside the community of faith

In much of modern Protestant theology doubt prevails as to the viability of such an appeal to reason and natural law in the construction of Christian social ethics. The bridge between church and world has been shattered. Thus what the churches have to say on social issues has no way of reaching the other side, and the churches end up in dangerous isolation from society, speaking only to themselves.

H. Richard Niebuhr's classic *Christ and Culture* depicts five models of relationship between the church and society. At one extreme are those who set Christ against culture, which leads to a sectarian strategy of withdrawing from the world into separate Christian communities. At the other extreme—Christ of culture—are those who collapse their Christian identity into the cultural *Zeitgeist*, thus becoming culture-conforming Christians. The middle three models represent the typical Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist ways of relating Christianity and culture. Catholics have held rather firmly to natural law thinking in constructing their social teachings. The modern representatives of the two branches of the Reformation, Lutherans and Calvinists, have not so clearly retained a firm foothold in natural law theory. In fact, they swing erratically between a position of utter rejection of natural law and one of conditional acceptance. Almost never do they concede as much to natural law as we find in modern Catholic social teaching.

My purpose in what follows is to tell the story of the inner Protestant struggle over the question of natural law, from complete rejection in Barthian covenant theology to qualified acceptance in a Lutheran theology that draws a proper distinction between law and gospel, creation and redemption. Beyond that, I want to propose that Protestant social ethics reappropriate the natural law tradition, taking into account the validity of its own tradition of criticism and placing natural law carefully within theological brackets defined by principles articulated in the Reformation tradition (particularly in the Lutheran branch that I know best), and with an added twist of eschatological theology.

My interest in this project is ecumenically motivated. Lutherans have officially engaged in dialogues with Roman Catholics for over twenty-five years, covering numerous doctrinal topics such as ministry, baptism, eucharist, authority, papacy, Mary and the saints, and most recently Scripture and tradition. But I would submit that social ethics is also a challenging area

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in which to explore our differences. If and when this is done, the use and interpretation of natural law will necessarily become a focal point.

I

Karl Barth is a central figure in the branch of modern Protestantism that rejects natural law. Barth held that Christian ethics has no use for an approach that concerns itself with universal principles inscribed in human nature and ascertainable by reason. Instead, he insisted, ethics is based directly on the command of the living God, which "is always an individual command for the conduct of this man, at this moment and in this situation; a prescription for this case of his; a prescription for the choice of a definite possibility of human intention, decision, and action." Here we have the root of Protestant situation ethics, later popularized and reduced to a humanistic framework by Joseph Fletcher.

Barth never provided a systematic treatment of natural law, but throughout his various stages of development he battled against every appeal to natural theology or natural law. As he said, theological ethics that bases itself on the Word of God alone "will not, then, make the disastrous, traitorous use of 'natural' theology, which is the only use that can be made of it." He saw natural law as the self-assertion of autonomous humanity and natural religion, and, for this reason, he felt he had to speak an irreconcilable "no" to every attempt to derive ethical norms either from the orders of creation, as Lutherans did, or from nature, as Catholics did.

Barth, of course, recognized that there is such a thing as natural law, in the same sense as he recognized that there is human religion. At its best, natural law is the quest for order on the part of the state and of non-Christians, who have no other source of knowledge, inasmuch as they do not derive their knowledge from above, that is, from divine revelation in Christ and the Bible. The dilemma for Barthian Christians is how it is possible to engage in public ethical discourse in a pluralistic world, when the majority, who are non-Christian, do not accept the Christian source of revelation. Barth's refusal to find common ground or an apologetic bridge on which both Christians and non-Christians could walk and talk was not convincing to other theologians—notably Emil Brunner—who resumed an interest in natural law, although always seemingly with something of a bad conscience on account of Barth's strictures.

Barth was not alone in rejecting natural law. Perhaps his most faithful disciple in this area was Jacques Ellul. In *The Theological Foundations of Law* (1960) Ellul based all of law and justice on Christology. The whole world and the entire human situation, he argued, have changed on account of God's revelation and redemptive act in Christ. It follows that law also must be affected by this event. Christians and non-Christians are both objectively in a new situation, since Christ died for all and was raised for the world's justification. Whatever has been called natural law henceforth loses its determinative character and is relativized by justification.

The problem with this thoroughgoing Christological version of natural law, of course, is that it is derived from a source that non-Christians do not share. Once again—no bridge, no common ground. Since the majority do not live within the covenant community and do not share its faith, what basis is there for cooperation between Christians and non-Christians in the public orders of life? We are confronted either by a triumphalist theology of glory in which Christians must conquer the public space, or by sectarian withdrawal into ghetto-like communities alongside, and outside, the world. The hermeneutical issue becomes a burning one. If everything bearing on law and justice is derived from the Bible on account of Christ and is known exclusively by the community of believers, then how is it possible for non-Christians to do what is good and right?

The Protestant rejection of natural law has found expression in American circles in the ethics of Paul Lehmann and Stanley Hauerwas. Lehmann, who was professor of ethics at Harvard Divinity School, renounced natural law theory in the name of his "koinonia ethics." Following Barth, he rejected the idea "that there is a common link between the believer and the nonbeliever grounded in the nature of human reason which enables both believer and nonbeliever to make certain ethical judgments and to address themselves in concert to commonly acknowledged ethical situations." Stanley Hauerwas flatly asserts that "Christian ethics theologically does not have a stake in 'natural law' understood as an independent and sufficient morality." Ethics for Hauerwas stands exclusively on the basis of the story about God that Christians learn from the Bible within the context of a covenant community.

II

Why did the tradition of natural law fall on hard times in Protestant theology? One might plausibly imagine that the reason lies deeply embedded in the Reformation theology of Martin Luther and John Calvin. However, John T. McNeill, the Reformation historian, concludes otherwise:

> There is no real discontinuity between the teaching of the Reformers and that of their predecessors with respect to natural law. Not one of the leaders of the Reformation assails the principle. Instead, with the possible exception of Zwingli, they all on occasion express a quite ungrudging respect for the moral law naturally implanted in the human heart and seek to

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> inculcate this attitude in their readers. Natural law is not one of the issues on which they bring the Scholastics under criticism. With safeguards of their primary doctrines, but without conscious resistance on their part, natural law enters into the framework of their thought and is an assumption of their political and social teaching. . . . For the Reformers, as for the Fathers, canonists, and Scholastics, natural law stood affirmed on the pages of Scripture.

The pressure to abandon the teaching of natural law stemmed not so much from the Reformation as from post-Enlightenment developments in philosophy, especially utilitarianism and positivism. There was a loss of belief not only in a special divine revelation through Scripture and the church, but also in the ability of reason to discern a natural moral order in human affairs. The way was prepared for law to become an instrument of power: might makes right. The positivistic attitude toward law and its validity rendered people impotent in the face of the lawlessness of law. With the collapse of the religious and metaphysical foundations of justice, the totalitarian state could successfully manipulate law as a mere function of absolute power. There was no other criterion of validity for the law than the will of those who had the monopoly of force. The twentieth century has paid a heavy price in legalized atrocities and crimes against humanity as a result of the ascendancy of legal positivism in classrooms, legislatures, and courtrooms.

After World War II, it seemed as though many people had had enough. Protestant theologians were invited to reconsider the relation between Christian faith and law. Churches gained a renewed sense of responsibility for the process and quality of law in social life. The World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation sponsored conferences to discuss the proper theological response to legal positivism. They debated whether Christian ethics and natural law are in fact antithetical or perhaps instead complementary.

The results of the conferences and new publications in the field of Christian ethics showed that Protestant theologians were in a quandary about natural law. Theologians like Helmut Thielicke and Walter Künneth moved away from Barth's rejection of natural law, but were still concerned to reiterate the chief Protestant theological objections to the concept. Natural law came to be seen as a kind of necessary evil, or as an illegitimate child who could not be completely abandoned, but whose rights must be severely restricted.

The chief reason for this theological hesitancy to fully recognize natural law is the problem of sin. Natural law seems to suggest that the order of being in the original creation has not been totally disrupted by the fall and sin. Further, it suggests that human reason is not so blinded as to be incapable of reading the will of God in the natural structures of creation. On the contrary, Protestants have wanted to argue, the *imago dei* is so fully destroyed that there remains only a negative relationship to God. In this view, natural law theory is guilty of elevating reason above revelation as criterion and standard of what is right and wrong, true and false. In a fallen world, there are no absolute laws or immutable orders untainted by sin. Thielicke says that, since the fall, we confront at best "orders of preservation." And Künneth speaks of "emergency orders" through which God is working to sustain human life in a fallen world. Natural law also lacks the eschatological perspective that relegates all orders of life to provisional status, always ambiguous and incomplete, moving along in history in the realm of contingency and novelty.

Despite their criticisms, theologians like Thielicke and Künneth cannot really dispense with natural law. They recognize that it has abiding significance as the sign of the human quest for justice and right. Heuristically, it functions as a goad to the pursuit of approximate justice in an imperfect world. The church needs to respect the common search for justice and law and to promote cooperation between Christians and non-Christians in all spheres of public life. Nonetheless, even with such half-hearted concessions to natural law, it seems clear that these Protestant theologians could not make significant contributions to its renewal and furtherance in society. They write of it with an uneasy conscience, as though natural law has become forbidden fruit for Protestant theology.

Catholic theologians rightly complain that when Protestants write about natural law, they always take the worst-case scenario, as though there had not also been a history of revision of natural law theory. They complain that when Protestant theologians write about natural law, they see it as something fixed, always and everywhere the same and always perceptible as such, as though it existed above and beyond history in a static world of eternal principles.

Caricatures of natural law abound in Protestant textbooks on social and political ethics. We have only to cite the works of Jacques Maritain and John Courtney Murray to see that the usual caricatures do not match the actual representations of natural law theory under the conditions of modern times. Who would wish to argue that these Catholic intellectuals are out of touch with the changing and diverse constellation of factors that the facts of historical development impose on the church and its social context? Their commitment to natural law did not make them medieval philosophers who would depreciate historical particularity and historical process or ignore the imperative that the concrete uniqueness of each situation of decision and action be attended to.

The common criticism of Roman Catholic natural law theorists on the part of Protestant theology is twofold. As Catholics, in distinction from the Protestant Reformers, they do not take sin seriously. As

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Romans, they are bound to a medieval philosophy—namely, Aristotelian Thomism—and thus cannot take history seriously. Such caricatures and charges are the stuff of which serious ecumenical conversations could be made—but as far as I know, that is a task that remains to be accomplished.

An ecumenical dialogue on the place of natural law in Christian social ethics is particularly necessary and timely, in my opinion, as a kind of counterattack against the wholesale deconstruction of the classical moral and legal principles on which Western culture is founded. Deconstructionism and its academic allies hold that meaning and truth are imposed on texts and situations and are not inherent in the way things are created. The pursuit of truth and justice is increasingly spurned in the academy and replaced with politically correct ideology. Moral relativism joins with political activism to sabotage the rules and standards needed to implement a societal system ordered by principles of justice and truth. When the normlessness and the nihilistic effects of the deconstructionist mindset are no longer confined to academia, but invade the wider public, the way is prepared for the moral collapse of social institutions or for the enthronement of the totalitarian state. The love affair of some of the founding deconstructionists with the Nazis has been widely reported and should not surprise us. Perhaps it is time to expose current relativist and nihilist theories as the underside of totalitarian ideologies and political authoritarianism. A revival of natural law can be of use in that project.

III

As already indicated, there was in the early dialectical theology of modern Protestantism an extreme antithesis between biblical revelation and natural law. There followed, in the name of faithfulness to biblical revelation, a kind of contempt for natural theology, natural law, and natural reason. And even among Protestants who allow a limited role for natural law in the construction of social ethics, it functioned mostly as a symbolic sign of the human quest for justice in the social order.

Yet there are Protestant theologians who hold to a positive correlation, correspondence, and cooperation between revelation and natural law. They see no necessary opposition between evangelical faith that focuses on the justification of the ungodly on account of Christ and the Catholic doctrine of natural law with its appeal to a universal justice and morality to which people have access through their reason and conscience. An eclectic variety of Protestants—from a Lutheran like Paul Althaus to a Reformed theologian like Emil Brunner to a philosophical theologian like Paul Tillich—holds to a more positive view of natural law. Wolfhart Pannenberg also comes down decidedly on the side of finding an anthropological foundation for asserting a common core of justice and law to which all people in principle have access through reason and conscience, even if the particulars of that common ground are provisional, relative, and always ambiguous under the conditions of our finite human existence. Pannenberg's theological perspective keeps the eschatological horizon in focus at all times.

This new affirmation of natural law would also seek a rehabilitation of reason. Reason has suffered a tragic history, and Protestants have often derived a certain *Schadenfreude* from reports of its demise. When reason is discredited, suffers calamity and chaos, theology seems justified in making a retreat to the safe haven of fideism. Yet with reason disqualified, faith becomes overloaded and the wires of faith overheated. Out of such fideism often come direct sorties into the public realm, carried on without benefit of any rational accountability. We may call this the Ayatollah Khomeini phenomenon, one whose effects are equally dangerous no matter in which particular god's name the crusade is being undertaken.

It is necessary to correct the widespread assumption that from the presuppositions of Reformation theology there can be no access to natural law, as though the Reformation's view of Scripture, revelation, Christ, salvation, and faith barred the door to every kind of natural theology, natural law, and rational morality. But it must be equally clear that evangelical theology will hold to a highly circumscribed view of natural law, one that is placed within theological brackets, so that it does not function in separation from the whole of theology. Edmund Schlink, professor of systematic and ecumenical theology at Heidelberg University, spelled out the conditions under which a theologian can take up natural law. Natural law, he said, cannot be a doctrine that establishes the rights of humankind before God. Humans have no rights *coram deo*, but only *coram hominibus*. Because of the fall into sin, there is no ontological continuity between the original creation and the new creation that is apprehended through faith alone. The church's primary task is to proclaim Christ to the nations for the world's salvation. Nevertheless, the church does have a political responsibility during the interim between the first and the final advent of Christ. It is within this interim that the limited but necessary function of natural law must be maintained.

Lutherans need not have any confessional scruples about affirming such a limited role for natural law. It is necessary to observe the proper distinction between the *coram* relationships. *Coram deo* and *coram hominibus* are two different levels of relationship. *Coram deo*, humans are not capable of doing anything that is right before God, anything on the basis of which God is required to set humans in a right relationship with himself. Sin disrupts the right relationship between God and humanity. But this does not negate the fact that humans are capable of doing what is good and right in the order of human rela-

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tionships, *coram hominibus*. Natural law possesses no theological significance in the sense of providing a basis of human salvation. Yet the negative verdict on natural law in the vertical dimension need not entail a corresponding rejection of natural law on the horizontal line. The choice between biblical revelation and natural law is a false one.

A concept of natural law in critical correlation with evangelical theology need not retain the particular metaphysical foundations it received in the medieval Thomistic-Aristotelian synthesis. The idea of a law rooted in the nature of humanity and the world and discoverable by reason has been traced back to the "dawn of conscience." The history of natural law shows a wide variety of interpretations and applications. The Protestant polemic against natural law has been directed primarily against the medieval Thomistic theory of natural law, but that does not mean that the Protestant mind must be closed to any and every concept of natural law. The word "nature" in natural law can mean different things. It may mean the immanent structure of human reason, that which all human beings have in common by virtue of being human beings. Its theological correlate would, thus, simply be the *imago dei*. Or "nature" may refer to an ideal state in some Golden Age in the past, as in Rousseau's "return to nature," uncorrupted by civilization. Or it may refer to the fallen condition of humanity, as in the familiar words of the confession: "We confess unto thee, O Lord, that we are by nature sinful and unclean."

There are similar variations of meaning with respect to the term "law." "Law" may refer to a moral principle written into human hearts by God and therefore possessing universal validity. Or law may be something imposed on human beings from the outside, by the authority of God or the State or some other power. It may refer to the Ten Commandments, the Torah, or the Sermon on the Mount. It may refer to the inalienable rights of human beings that all nations are morally bound to acknowledge. When we put "nature" and "law" together, we confront a legion of possible meanings. We cannot *a priori* foreclose the possibility that a concept of natural law is fully compatible with a theological framework faithful to the confessional writings of the Reformation. Thus we cannot agree with Jacques Ellul when he writes that "the doctrine of natural law as a Christian doctrine is . . . ruled out at every point."

IV

We conclude with a schematic outline of a reinterpretation of natural law within the basic principles of evangelical theology.

1. We have to begin with the fact that none of the confessional documents of the Reformation, neither those of the Lutheran nor of the Calvinist traditions, rejected the notion of natural law. There was nothing in their interpretation of the Scriptures that called for such a rejection. In fact, they acknowledged that Scripture teaches that the Gentiles, although outside the scope of God's special revelation to Israel, are able to know something of God's law through the works of creation by means of conscience and reason. To be sure, the Reformers, as biblical theologians, were primarily concerned to draw the proper contrast between the old law and the new on account of Christ. But at the same time, they acknowledged that the biblical authors do to some degree recognize elements of the law of God among the Gentiles, a law that in some way must be related to the law of creation that reaches its perfection in Christ.

2. An evangelical theology will interpret the role of natural law in light of the hermeneutical distinction between law and gospel. In light of this dialectic, it is possible to develop a Christian understanding of the world and all secular institutions. The word *gospel* refers to the absolute particularity and uniqueness of the message concerning God's coming into the world in the person of Jesus Christ. This places all law in a new light; the legalistic character of the law is contrasted with the creative freedom of the gospel.

3. Along with the particularity of the gospel which rests on the *solus Christus*, evangelical theology will want to insist on the other *solas*, such as *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *sola scriptura*. But evangelical theology will assert that these *solas* are also good Catholic theology, as Karl Rahner has vigorously argued in *Foundations of Christian Faith* (1978). He writes:

> For a Catholic understanding of the faith there is no reason why the basic concern of Evangelical Christianity as it comes to expression in the three "only's" should have no place in the Catholic Church. Accepted as basic and ultimate formulas of Christianity, they do not have to lead a person out of the Catholic Church. . . . They can call the attention of the Catholic church again and again to the fact that grace alone and faith alone really are what saves, and that with all our maneuvering through the history of dogma and the teaching office, we Catholic Christians must find our way back to the sources again and again, back to the primary origins of Holy Scripture and all the more so of the Holy Spirit.

With such clear provisos, much of the passionate criticism of Protestant theology directed against the place of natural law in Catholic moral theology might be deflected. The Reformation *solas* function to relativize natural theology, natural law, and the orders-of-creation theology so that they cannot be used as an independent starting point and approach to the knowledge of God with any salvific potential. The

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law is not a way of salvation; at best, it is a way in which God's preserving grace is effective in ordering the world.

4. The doctrine of original sin must be taken seriously. This means that the fundamental structure of reality, including the rational and social nature of humanity, is deeply affected by sin. We live in a fallen world in which demonic forces have been let loose, distorting everything, including human reason. The image of God in humanity is not totally destroyed; rather, it is disoriented, putting humanity in a wrong relationship with God and the world. If the original creation, including the *imago dei,* is thought to be totally destroyed or depraved, this leads to a kind of Protestant pessimism that places all ethics within the order of redemption and the new creation. This partly accounts for the fact that Protestant ethics has tended to be purely personalistic and voluntaristic, relying on discrete commands announced by God now and then, in this situation or that. Protestant ethics shows a marked tendency to fall into pure occasionalism, actualism, and situationism. The fundamental givens are either denied altogether or ignored, so that the ethical decision is made existentially in each moment and each situation. With the loss of general rules and enduring principles, it is difficult to find a bridge to the public orders of life in which Christians and non-Christians can work side by side.

5. An evangelical social ethic will integrate the eschatological perspective into its ethical theory. The eschatological kingdom of God's love is communicated through the gospel as the justification of the ungodly and sinners on account of Christ, but it is communicated through worldly structures of power and justice under the conditions of a sinful world. This is the basis of Luther's distinction between the two realms or two kingdoms, and correlates with the two states of believing existence in the world, as *simul justus et peccator.*

6. The proper work of love is expressed by the gospel as the forgiveness of sins and new life in Christ. The strange work of love (*opus alienum*) is expressed by the law as God's instrument to effect justice in a world that does not believe in the gospel. Justice is too important a matter for God simply to leave to loving persons. Justice can be accomplished in the world in either of two ways: by the miraculous presence and spontaneity of love or by the pressure and threats of the law. The concept of natural law in one sense is misleading because, when people do what comes naturally, it is neither very just nor very loving. Nevertheless, the idea of natural law is indispensable because it aims to establish a criterion of justice that transcends human conventions or habits and that, in some way, is universally intelligible. The love of God is strangely at work behind the back of every human being, seeking justice through law that cannot be identified with mere custom, arbitrariness, power, or interest.

7. Love that expresses itself as justice and by means of law is not at all antithetical to principles and rules that can be clearly formulated to prescribe as well as to guide the ethical decisions and moral actions of human beings and institutions. The antinomian idea that love cannot be mediated by rule and principle has sneaked into situation ethics and hides behind the *agape* label, as though there were no way to translate love into the language of moral norms and principles.

8. When the rule of God's love expresses itself indirectly and *sub contario* through structures of justice and law, rules can be formulated in advance of particular situations. For example, with respect to freedom and equality, rules have been formulated in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Similarly, there could be no World Court to try war criminals if there were no preexisting consensus on what is lawful in warfare. The notion that there are no rules but only situations is an unrealistic appraisal of the human condition outside of Paradise, this side of Eden. Thus the primary commitment of Christian ethics to the truth and power of love, as manifest supremely in the Christ event, relates to law in a dialectically differentiated way, true to the complexities of the human situation within the fallen world and the new things inaugurated by the inbreaking of God's kingdom in Jesus Christ.

9. An evangelical social ethic will necessarily correlate eschatology and natural law, or it will forfeit its right to be considered a biblically Christian viewpoint. One chief problem of traditional natural law theory is that it seems to be more at home in a deistic view of God and the world than in a trinitarian vision which alone can span the whole field of reality from creation to consummation. The final truth of all things is revealed by the arrival of the eschatological future in the person of Jesus Christ. The eschatological future of the kingdom is the power that draws all people, whether they know it or not. This power has been revealed in Jesus Christ as the highest good which all people implicitly seek in their quest for fulfillment. Therefore, when people strive for justice under the conditions of its absence—and this goes on in all societies—they are in quest of something true and transcendent that for them is still future and yet to be fulfilled. From the Christian point of view, this highest good is the kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed and embodied in his very person. The universal human quest for justice can be seen to be the anticipatory presence of the kingdom of God at work throughout the created order, even under the conditions of sin and estrangement. Natural law can be viewed as the presence of the kingdom of God in

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the universal human striving for what is good and right. It is fortunate that "natural law" has been kept alive in Roman Catholic moral theology, but somewhat regrettable that it has survived in a non-eschatological framework and is therefore also often not attuned to the dynamics of history. The merits of the natural law tradition can be taken up into the framework of an eschatological perspective.

10. Openness to the tradition of natural law prevents Christian ethics from absorbing itself totally within the realm of individual personal relationships, which has been the trend in Protestant existentialism. While it is necessary to distinguish between the individual-personal and the social-political dimensions of the kingdom of God, it is important not to separate them as though the realm of personal relations were unrelated to the realm of social involvements and political institutions. The non-eschatological form of the two-kingdoms ethic in conservative Lutheranism has tended to dichotomize personal ethics and social ethics.

11. When natural law is baptized by Christian theology, it may be seen as the means by which God is ordering the world on its way forward to the final judgment and consummation. The hope of the world does not lie in optimism about nature and law or in schemes for patching up the old creation; it lies rather in announcing the advent of a new creation in Christ. Even the most splendidly ordered world, even a veritable utopia on earth, would still exist in open rebellion against the gospel, counting on a righteousness of works in opposition to the righteousness of unmerited grace that is a gift from above.

12. The introduction of the eschatological perspective may be disheartening to Christians who dream about a Christian world order and rely on Christian social activism to save the world, or who believe the church ought to remake the world after its own image. On the other hand, the strategy of linking the eschatological perspective to natural law to provide common ground for Christians and non-Christians to share burdens for maintaining and ordering the world may appear as compromise to radical Christians who hear the call of the gospel to leave the world and escape the coming fire and judgment. The problem of natural law arises for Christians who take the intermediate position and accept responsibility for the preservation and ordering of the world. We may think of this in terms of believers cooperating with God in preserving the world so that the world may be given time to learn of its true destiny in the kingdom of God.

13. It may appear that the eschatological perspective has so relativized natural law that it hardly deserves to be called natural law anymore. In that perspective, our liberties are relative, our rights are relative. There are no absolute laws, no unconditioned principles in this world which, from the perspective of God's judgment, is passing away and is meanwhile maintained only by permission of the divine patience. We have set limits to natural law by placing it within theological brackets because from the perspective of God's final revelation in Jesus Christ not too much should be expected from the possibilities of human nature and human reason. God does not save the world through natural law; God does not reconcile the world through the pursuit of justice; God does not transform human hearts through the struggles for human rights; God does not create a community of love by all of our best efforts to order the world for the better. To know this is to draw the proper distinction between law and gospel, as Lutherans would put it, or between nature and grace, as Catholics have traditionally said it. There is a distinction between these different conceptualities, but not of the kind or to a degree that would necessitate Protestants' continued rejection of natural law for the sake of magnifying the gospel. FT

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Salman Rushdie Gets Religion

Alan Jacobs

The protagonist of *No Longer At Ease* by the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe is a young man named Obi Okonkwo who has recently returned to Nigeria after taking a degree in English literature at Oxford University. Obi's interview for a civil service position turns into a discussion about books, during which Obi remarks offhandedly that Graham Greene's novel about Africa, *The Heart of the Matter*, is "nearly ruined by the happy ending." This statement puzzles Obi's interlocutor, because that book ends with a suicide. But Obi knows what he's taking about: he's just trying to rethink the notion of tragedy. The Western tragic hero has the advantage, in Obi's view, of dying and thus escaping suffering: "Real tragedy is never resolved. It goes on hopelessly forever."

Salman Rushdie surely would appreciate this theory. Long after the general public has lost interest in his personal drama, Rushdie still lives in hiding, moving from place to place under the direction of Scotland Yard, continually reminded by the Iranian government that his death sentence will not, indeed cannot, be revoked. (Only the late Ayatollah Khomeini, they claim, could have revoked his own *fatwa*, or judgment.) Condemned to live in perpetual uncertainty, secrecy, and fear, Rushdie has some claim to be considered as Obi Okonkwo's kind of tragic figure.

But while his situation has not changed—while, so to speak, its instability has remained constant—Rushdie himself may have changed quite radically. Having been vocal throughout his career about his lack of religious belief, Rushdie on Christmas Day 1990 announced that he had become, for the first time in his life, a believing Muslim. This announcement surprised and dismayed Rushdie's strongest supporters, most of whom believe, as he had believed, that religion in general (and Islam especially) is a perniciously regressive and oppressive force in society. The lawyer Francis Bennion—who resigned in anger from the Salman Rushdie Defense Committee, saying that "Rushdie is not worth defending"—was not alone in thinking that Rushdie's conversion meant that he had "surrendered to would-be murderers."

Such an interpretation is patently absurd, since it depends on the ignorant assumption that to accept Islam is to accept the beliefs and actions of Khomeini and his followers. (Bennion called Islam "that bigoted creed that holds its followers entitled to murder a novelist for what he has written in a novel," thus confidently summing up in a single sentence the character of a religion whose eight hundred million adherents are riven by numerous controversies—including this one.) In "Why I Have Embraced Islam," the final essay in Rushdie's new collection (*Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*, Viking/Penguin, 1991), he appeals to the larger community of Muslims throughout the world, quite clearly not to Teheran. But little else is clear from that essay, the most notable feature of which is that it makes no attempt whatsoever to answer the question its title promises to answer. It describes with warmth and gratitude a meeting that Rushdie had on Christmas Eve 1990 with six Muslim scholars, but does not say whether that meeting had any influence upon his decision. It says that he had been moving towards religious belief for several years, and that *The Satanic Verses* is a mirror of his internal conflicts, but it does not say how, when, or (again) why he resolved those conflicts in favor of religious belief.

It would be presumptuous to attempt to answer such a private question, especially with so little information available. But a careful reading of the two books that Rushdie has published since his going underground—*Imaginary Homelands* and his so-called children's novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (Viking/Penguin, 1991)—certainly provides some of the necessary context for thinking about the question. And that is what I want to do.

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II

Hundreds of articles and several books have already appeared about Rushdie's case. Among the more useful of the books is Daniel Pipes' *The Rushdie Affair* (1990), largely because of its author's knowledge of Islamic and Arabic culture. Pipes is able to explain, for instance, that one of the reasons so many Muslims in the Arab world condemned Rushdie's book without having read it is that its very title appears to be deeply offensive. The Arabic word used to translate "Verses" is *ayat*, which specifically refers to the verses of the Qur'an (cognate words have been used in the Turkish and Persian translations as well); therefore, to Muslim ears the book's very title appears to claim that the Qur'an is inspired not by God but by Satan. In fact, Rushdie's title refers to verses that, according to an early Islamic tradition, were indeed communicated to Muhammad by Satan, but were ultimately removed by God's command. (The verses allowed the continued worship of three Meccan goddesses, and thus compromised Islam's rigorous monotheism.)

Pipes is also able to point out that the absence of a novelistic tradition in Islamic countries seems to have confused many clerics, who challenged the book for being factually inaccurate—as though Rushdie had tried to write a historical chronicle but, whether intentionally or inadvertently, had got things all wrong. There is, of course, a great tradition of storytelling in the Arab world, but that tradition is clearly distinguished from historical narrative in a way that the Western novel often is not. Still, it has to be said that overall, Pipes' understanding of the literary questions surrounding *The Satanic Verses* is not very acute; and in my view it is precisely the literary questions that ultimately provide the key to understanding the religious dimensions of Rushdie's thinking. Pipes' account—like most of the accounts I have read—focuses, for obvious reasons, on Rushdie's and his book's relation to the Islamic world. But their relation to British intellectual and literary culture is, in a very different way, equally vital.

It would certainly be a mistake to think of Rushdie as a British writer; but it would be scarcely less of a mistake to think of him as an Indian one. He was born in Bombay in 1947, two months before India's independence, into what might be called a Muslim home. I say "might be" with cause; Rushdie himself doesn't seem to be sure. In 1985 he wrote, "I was brought up in an Indian Muslim household, but while both my parents were believers neither was insistent or doctrinaire." In "Why I Have Embraced Islam," however, he tells a different story: "Although I come from a Muslim family background, I was not brought up as a believer, and was raised in an atmosphere of what is broadly known as secular humanism." This "atmosphere" may be a reference to Bombay itself, which Rushdie calls the "most cosmopolitan, most hybrid, most hotch-potch" of Indian cities; one gets the distinct impression that Bombay's cultural smorgasbord—its strong British governmental (and architectural) presence, its blend of Hindu and Muslim cultures, its Babel of languages, and (especially important to Rushdie) its diverse and energetic film industry—shaped Rushdie's character far more than his family did. The cacophony of voices, the welter of images, that dominate Rushdie's expansive and extravagant novels seem clear testimony to that.

In any case, Rushdie's father, who had taken a degree in law from Cambridge University before returning to India permanently, prepared his son to follow a similar path. Rushdie was educated in British schools in Bombay until he was thirteen, then left India to attend Rugby. After Rugby came Cambridge, where he read history, saw "five or six movies a week," and became involved in acting. Rushdie had not wanted to attend Cambridge; his father had "bullied" him into it. It is therefore not surprising that after graduation Rushdie left England—but not, as he would have hoped, for India, for while he was studying abroad his family had fled the difficulties of Muslims in India and had resettled in Pakistan. Rushdie worked for a time writing, producing, and acting for Pakistani television, but was quickly frustrated by strict censorship: for instance, he was forced to remove the word "pork" from a production of Edward Albee's play *A Zoo Story*, even though the reference to pork was disparaging. A television executive sharply told him that "pork is a four-letter word." So after only a short stay in Pakistan, Rushdie returned to England, where he dabbled in acting, got a job writing advertising copy for a London firm, and eventually found the time to write his first novel, *Grimus*. In his own words, *Grimus*, "to put it mildly, bombed"; but he was now a writer, and after the publication of *Midnight's Children* in 1981, a highly respected and much-praised one. The world of the London intelligentsia was hereafter his world—insofar as he had one at all.

What is the moral of this story? There are in fact several, but one demands our attention. All of Rushdie's experiences have conspired to make him his "mongrel self, history's bastard," a man without a country and without a culture. The quoted phrase is actually spoken by the protagonist of *Midnight's Children*, Saleem Sinai, but Saleem, like Gibreel Farishta in *The Satanic Verses*, looks, acts, and thinks a lot like Rushdie himself. Both Saleem and Gibreel sing the same song, a popular movie tune whose Hindustani words Rushdie (in an essay) translates thus:

O, my shoes are Japanese
These trousers English, if you please
On my head, red Russian hat
My heart's Indian for all that

But what does it mean for one's heart to be Indian?

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Increasingly, Rushdie complains in a number of essays, the Gandhi family dynasty (which now may be at an end) and its Congress Party have fostered the belief that to be a true Indian one must be a Hindu and speak Hindustani. Rushdie, of course, is no Hindu; and his first language was Urdu (now the official language of Pakistan), which, though almost identical to Hindustani, is written in Arabic script and uses many Arabic and Persian words. And his English education, including the rather "posh" Oxbridge accent he picked up there, further distances him from anything that might be called "truly" Indian. "I've been in a minority group all my life," he writes, "a member of an Indian Muslim family in Bombay, then of a 'mojahir'—migrant—family in Pakistan, and now as a British Asian." One could indeed find no better example than Salman Rushdie of that peculiarly modern figure, the culturally homeless, the deracinated and hence atomistic individual—the monad bouncing through the cosmos with no hope of finding a resting place, no hope (in Walker Percy's term) of achieving "reentry."

But this kind of homelessness is not without its compensations. (For some people, it should be noted, the other, more literal kind is not without them as well: a couple of years ago Frank Lentricchia, a Marxist literary critic from Duke University, said in a lecture that he envied—yes, envied—"the moral authority of homelessness." If you think about that for a while it starts to make a perverse kind of sense. The homeless, being by definition the most oppressed people in our society, cannot oppress anyone else; they are by virtue of their class affiliation unable to sin.) Rushdie's cultural homelessness confers moral authority without asking its possessor to exchange any material prosperity. It is a kind of inexhaustible currency, and Rushdie has not been reluctant to spend it.

In *Imaginary Homelands*, he uses it to make pronouncements about Indian, Pakistani, Middle Eastern, and British politics; about literature from a variety of Third World countries; about movies; about American culture; about the place of religion in the modern world; and on and on. Many of the pronouncements have an *ex cathedra* quality, and their author is not afraid of the sweeping generalization. To take just one example: in an essay called "In God We Trust," Rushdie characterizes the 1980s in America as "a time of Falwells and book burnings," and claims that "the religious fundamentalism of the United States is as alarming as anything in the much-feared world of Islam." He does not say why he is so alarmed; presumably his audience of highly cultured Britons would not need to be told. But the evidence he cites to support his belief in the imminent collapse of American culture is telling. It is drawn from two sources: the short stories of Raymond Carver, and the movie *The Falcon and the Snowman*. Apparently it does not occur to Rushdie to ask whether these are reliable sources for any sort of cultural interpretation, much less universal judgments about a country as complex as this one.

How can Rushdie get away with this sort of thing? There are in my view three reasons. First, he is writing for a politically monolithic audience, for whom anti-capitalism and anti-Americanism are automatic and reflexive. Second, as a member of the oppressed classes, he has the "moral authority"—at least within this monolithic audience—to pass judgment on those persons, classes, societies, and nations that qualify as oppressors.

The third point is a little more complicated. It may be illustrated by Rushdie's first real brush with controversy, an episode that occurred in 1982. Soon after the great success of *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie wrote and narrated a BBC television documentary called "The New Empire Within Britain." It concerned the waves of African and (especially) Asian immigrants that were then, and still are, transforming Great Britain's society, and accuses white Britons of widespread racism. The program outraged British conservatives, some of whom (including the current Foreign Minister, Geoffrey Howe) claimed that Rushdie had equated Britain with Nazi Germany. In his preface to *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie calls the accusation a "smear" and claims that "the piece repeatedly insists that the situation in Britain is *not* comparable to life under Nazism." And this is true. Sort of. Here are two of the passages in question:

> Britain isn't South Africa. I am reliably informed of this. Nor is it Nazi Germany. I've got that on the best authority as well. You may feel that these two statements are not exactly the most dramatic of revelations. But it's remarkable how often they, or similar statements, are used to counter the arguments of anti-racist campaigners. . . . If the defence for Britain is that mass extermination of racially impure persons hasn't yet begun, or that the principle of white supremacy hasn't actually been enshrined in the constitution, then something must have gone very wrong indeed.
>
> Let me repeat what I said at the beginning; Britain isn't Nazi Germany. The British Empire isn't the Third Reich. But in Germany, after the fall of Hitler, heroic attempts were made by many people to purify German thought and the German language of the pollution of Nazism. . . . But British thought, British society, has never been cleansed of the filth of imperialism. It's still there, breeding lice and vermin, waiting for unscrupulous people to exploit it for their own ends.

So Rushdie does not quite equate Great Britain and Nazi Germany. But in the first passage he implies that Great Britain will become Nazi Germany (mass exterminations have not *yet* happened), and in the second he compares the two nations to the disadvan-

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tage of Britain. In short, he may deny the conservatives' charge by appealing to the letter of his text, but the spirit of his comments remains perfectly apparent. This, then, is the third reason he can get away with making extravagant claims about his political enemies; he often manages, by the strictest definition, to make no claims at all.

Such coyness marks a recurrent pattern in Rushdie's thinking, and is characterized by a favorite locution of his: "is and is not." Saleem Sinai "is and is not" an autobiographical character; the Brick Street in which some passages of *The Satanic Verses* are set, Rushdie told a reporter, "is and is not" London's real Brick Lane. Furthermore, the narrator of *The Satanic Verses*—who, Rushdie says, is "occasionally" Satan himself—invites us to infer that the character of Mahound, to whom the sacred text of a new religion is dictated, "is and is not" Muhammad, and the city which becomes the home of this new religion (Jahilia, meaning "ignorance") "is and is not" Mecca. One need not multiply examples; Rushdie employs his remarkable linguistic powers to produce scathing critiques of whatever or whomever he happens to dislike, but when his critiques are challenged, he insists upon the fictionality of his discourse. The storyteller, or more broadly the artist, in this view, stands between What Is and What Is Not. Rushdie in 1990 described *The Satanic Verses* as a novel of "dissent": "It dissents most clearly from imposed orthodoxies *of all types*, from the view that the world is quite clearly This and not That. It dissents from the end of debate, of dispute, of dissent."

For Rushdie, then, what makes the novel special is its commitment to dialogue, its nonjudgmental presentation of many voices. Thus the novelist cannot be held personally responsible for the words, actions, or opinions of any of his characters; he is in effect the conductor of a verbal orchestra, who plays none of the instruments himself.

This dialogical quality of novels is vitally important to Rushdie because it provides a socially necessary counterbalance to the monological tendencies of religious belief. Religion—here comes another of those sweeping *ex cathedra* pronouncements—"seeks to privilege one language . . . one set of values . . . one text above all others." The novel, on the other hand, "insists upon the freedom to portray and analyze the struggle between the different contestants for such privileges." The novelist is to a considerable extent, then, the guardian of freedom in Western societies, or so one would conclude from this statement by the Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes, which Rushdie quotes approvingly: "Impose a unitary language; you kill the novel, but you also kill the society."

Rushdie's commitment to the sustenance of dialogue is in many ways admirable; for instance, his analysis of the novel's voices is quite similar to that of the greatest theorist of the novel, the Russian genius Mikhail Bakhtin, whose ideas arose as an alternative to the Stalinist monologue of the 1930s. Furthermore, it is certainly true that the novel has often played an important role in countering narrow cultural pieties and thoughtless prevailing opinions. One thinks of the galvanizing effect of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on American public opinion about slavery, or (at about the same time) Charles Dickens' eloquent protests against child labor practices in England. But isn't it possible that the novel, rather than being the virtual creator and sustainer of freedom, is largely a beneficiary of such freedom? Mightn't the claims of Rushdie and Fuentes be a little extravagant?

There are other, potentially more serious, problems with Rushdie's picture of the novel's social role. First of all, we should note that Stowe and Dickens did not merely present to us a series of equally valid voices; they made us hear voices we had chosen not to hear, voices whose speakers had a moral claim upon us. When David Copperfield speaks for children abused by factory owners, when the black characters of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* speak of their suffering, their words convict us and convict their abusers. In such books evil actions are placed under severe moral judgment, and the perpetrators and defenders of such actions do not speak with the same authority as their victims. Significantly, Rushdie himself boldly passes moral judgment in his fiction; Indira Gandhi, for instance, comes in for scathing chastisement in *Midnight's Children*, as does the Bhutto family of Pakistan in his third novel, *Shame*.

In some contexts Rushdie freely admits that he does engage in such judgments; in others he puts on his is-and-is-not coyness, and insists that his *characters* are passing judgment. But we can accept that demurral and still have some questions: Who decides what voices are to be represented, and in what proportions? Who chooses to give full verbal and narrational representation to the opponents of the Gandhis and the Bhuttos, and not to those leaders themselves? The novelist may or may not hold the opinions of his characters, but in deciding who will be heard and who will not, he or she exercises judgments that can be questioned, that can be "portrayed and analyzed" like any other claims, including those of "religion."

Let me hasten to say that I am not criticizing Rushdie for scolding the Bhuttos or the Gandhis—or even for arguing that British society is disfigured by an unconscious residual racism. All of these critiques are at the very least defensible, and sometimes compelling. What I am saying is that there is something fundamentally disingenuous and perhaps downright dishonest about using a dialogical aesthetic to avoid taking responsibility for one's own convictions. If Rushdie were able to purge his writings of his beliefs, leaving nothing but a chorus of conflicting voices without *any* pattern or order, the achievement would be nothing to brag about; but it happens to

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be impossible. And I don't think Rushdie even believes in it.

For instance: after making his absolute distinction between monological religion and dialogical fiction, Rushdie writes this:

> While the novel answers our need for wonderment and understanding, it brings us harsh and unpalatable news as well.
>
> It tells us that there are no rules. It hands down no commandments. We have to make up our own rules as best we can, make them up as we go along.
>
> And it tells us that there are no answers; or, rather, it tells us that answers are easier to come by, and less reliable, than questions.

Are these statement not claims? Are they not putative descriptions of How Things Are and what to do about it? "We have to make up our own rules as we go along"—that sounds suspiciously like a commandment to me. Has Rushdie, in this essay or in his novels, really escaped the kind of claim-making that he finds so dangerous in religion?

It is a point of some importance that on the very page that these statements appear, Rushdie appeals to the authority of Richard Rorty, for Rorty has been striving for more than a decade to convince philosophers to see their role in exactly the same way that Rushdie sees the novelist's role. For Rorty, philosophers are, whether they like it or not, storytellers, purveyors of more-or-less comforting, interesting, and stimulating fictions. In Rorty's view, the most complex and logically rigorous philosophical argument ultimately says no more than, "Listen to the story *I'm* telling and see if you don't like it better than the one *you've* been telling." People who think this way Rorty calls "liberal ironists," because they are tolerant, open-minded, and skeptical even about their own views; and Rorty thinks that if we all become liberal ironists the world will be a happier place. Why? Because liberal ironists—like Nietzsche and Jacques Derrida—are blissfully free from that arduous quest for Truth that has for so many centuries made philosophers irritable sourpusses and religious leaders hideous tyrants. As one contemporary Nietzschean puts it, "The good news is that there is no good news"; or, as a character in Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum* puts it, "I have understood. And the certainty that there is nothing to understand should be my peace, my triumph."

Where there is neither good news, nor Truth, nor anything to understand, what remains is storytelling. Not everyone agrees that these are the conditions, of course; the British scientist Stephen Hawking, for instance, goes to the opposite extreme, claiming that science is not far from producing a complete and accurate Theory of Everything that will effectively bring to a satisfying end "humanity's intellectual struggle to understand the universe." But Salman Rushdie, in reviewing Hawking's book (*A Brief History of Time*) is both skeptical of and horrified by this prediction. He compares Hawking's theories to the work of Italo Calvino, an Italian postmodern novelist ("a word-juggler, a fantasist"), and argues that "the real value of the ideas of the new physics and of quantum mechanics is precisely the same as that of Calvino's stories, namely, that they make it possible for us to dream new dreams, of ourselves as well as the universe." For Hawking, the job of the scientist is to come to know Everything; for Rushdie, the scientist does the same thing that the philosopher does, the same thing that the novelist does; they all tell stories, because stories are all we have.

This conviction inspires and drives Rushdie's most recent work of fiction, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Which means that we have Rushdie to thank for what may well be the world's first postmodern children's book.

III

Haroun and the Sea of Stories was written in confinement, and as the fulfillment of a very important promise. Rushdie explained to James Fenton that while he was writing *The Satanic Verses* his son, Zafar,

> had said it was wrong that I didn't write books that children could read. And we made a deal that I would be allowed to finish the book I was writing on condition that the next book I wrote would be one he might enjoy reading. That was the deal, and—then all this happened, and I was unable to do just about anything for him. And there was this (at the time) nine-year-old boy suddenly deprived of his father, and I thought there's only one promise to him I can keep, and in this situation I have to keep it. There was no way in which I could not keep it.

Haroun bears a moving dedication to Zafar—

> **Z** embla, Zenda, Xanadu:
> **A** ll our dream-worlds may come true.
> **F** airy lands are fearsome too.
> **A** s I wander far from view
> **R** ead, and bring me home to you.

—but, despite its frequent playfulness and fancifulness, it is by no means only a children's book. Many of the jokes are for adults; the novel is sprinkled with references to Rushdie's novelistic mentors, obscure rock groups, Beatles songs (one character is called I. M. D. Walrus), several movies, and Lord knows what else. More important, the key messages of the book—and, as a kind of allegory, the book definitely has messages—are directed at adults, and recapitulate, as I have suggested, some of the arguments from Rush-

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die's essays.

Haroun is actually a very good story, and I don't want to spoil it for those who haven't yet read it. But a sketch of the plot, or the conflict that generates the plot, is in order. Haroun is the only son of Rashid Khalifa, a great and celebrated storyteller, and his wife Soraya. Rashid's attention to his wife does not quite match his attention to his stories, and he does not notice that she is spending more and more time in the company of Mr. Sengupta, a skinny, petulant, whining government clerk who lives upstairs. Haroun overhears Mr. Sengupta's reptilian murmurings to Soraya: "What are all these stories? Life is not a storybook or a joke shop. All this fun will come to no good. What's the use of stories that aren't true?" This last question sticks in Haroun's mind, and when Soraya runs off with Mr. Sengupta, he throws it like a spear at his father. Wounded by the infidelities of his wife and son, Rashid loses his storytelling power; when he tries to spin a tale, he can only emit inarticulate crow-like squawks.

Haroun feels responsible for his father's loss, and sets out to make things right; but this determination leads him into a series of strange adventures, on Earth and on a hidden, unknown moon called Kahani (Hindustani for "story"). It soon becomes clear to Haroun that the deeper cause of his father's silence is the evil Khattum-shud, who lives on the dark side of Kahani and is, in Rashid's own words, "the Arch-Enemy of all Stories, even of Language itself." "He is the Prince of Silence and the Foe of Speech," and his single goal is to make everyone in the world silent—except for himself. The rest of the story involves Haroun's quest, which inevitably leads him closer and closer to the terrifying tyrant.

Here one of the book's surprises must be revealed, for it is absolutely essential to an understanding of Rushdie's message; when Haroun finally confronts Khattum-shud, he turns out to be none other than Mr. Sengupta, the apparently meek, if sour-tempered, clerk who convinces Soraya of the pointlessness of stories. (One should recall at this point the little old man who hides behind the imposing mask of the Wizard of Oz.) What does this tell us? First, we should note that Mr. Sengupta is a government clerk—Rushdie repeats the point several times—and thus as good an example as you could want of the kind of ordinary middle-class person who has kept the hated Tories in office in England (and the Republicans in this country) for the past decade. And such people, we have been told at least since Matthew Arnold, are Philistines; by which Arnold meant that they cannot understand and hence they despise the products of high culture. Furthermore, Philistines tend to be religious believers—many of them are even fundamentalists!—and they tend to justify their hatred of culture on religious grounds. Let us also recall that for Rushdie high culture is storytelling, and storytelling is high culture.

On the one side, then, we have Culture, Story, Imagination; on the other side, dull-witted, narrow-minded, reactionary tyrants—political *and* religious tyrants—in the apparently innocuous form that we call the bourgeoisie.

When Mike Wallace interviewed Rushdie for *60 Minutes* in the fall of 1990, he said offhandedly that Khattum-shud was of course the Ayatollah Khomeini—at which point Rushdie leaned forward in his chair and said, "I totally reject that interpretation." At the time I had not read the book, and chalked this up to Rushdie's characteristic evasiveness; but now I think he was right to demur. Khomeini is just one person, Khattum-shud a universal principle; one might say that Mr. Sengupta is (to use a Hindu term) one avatar of Khattum-shud, Khomeini another—and Margaret Thatcher another, and Ronald Reagan yet another, and so on *ad nauseam*.

Does Rushdie acknowledge any difference between the Western democracies and Khomeini's tyranny? Anyone who has read the text of the aforementioned documentary, "The New Empire Within Britain," wouldn't hold out much hope. But Rushdie wrote those words before the Thatcher government that he so despised gave him police protection from the terrorists who sought to kill him, and considered Khomeini's judgment on this one British citizen sufficiently repulsive to break diplomatic relations with Iran. Have these actions changed his thinking to any degree?

The answer is yes, but only slightly. On Kahani the good guys from Gup, the custodians of the Ocean of Story, tend to resemble Western democracies in their dedication to freedom of speech and their technological sophistication. But the bad guys from Chup, Khattum-shud and his followers, live in the darkness in part because the Eggheads (the scientists from Gup) have found a way to arrest the rotation of Kahani so that the light falls only on their side. Thus the Guppees are only relatively good, because they have sought to retain all good things for themselves and (in current jargon) to "demonize" the Chupwalas—whose badness in turn is not all their fault. In fact, it may be that only Khattum-shud is evil, the rest being his prisoners rather than his followers; and the power to make them prisoners is in effect given to Khattum-shud by the Guppees.

In short, the only people in this world or Kahani who have not rejected or in some measure betrayed Rushdie's commitment to storytelling are the storytellers themselves. They stand alone in a nasty world, having been abandoned by their so-called friends, the so-called decent people—in fact, they resemble no one so much as Gary Cooper in *High Noon*, except that they form a group. There they stand, in the dusty and deserted Main Street, with the bad guys riding into town and the good citizens hiding themselves away, their frightened eyeballs visible from the corners of

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their windows. "Well, Rorty," says Rushdie, peering at the bright sunshine from under his white hat, "Looks like there's nobody here but us liberal ironists. I mighta known."

IV

Why isn't that last paragraph really funny? Because people *are* trying to kill Salman Rushdie. Because those people have succeeded (as of last July) in killing the Japanese translator of *The Satanic Verses*, and in seriously wounding the book's Italian translator. And most of all because, when the storm over *The Satanic Verses* got strong enough, quite a few liberal ironists got out of town. Some British and American intellectuals encouraged Rushdie to withdraw the book, or were highly critical of his "cultural and religious insensitivity"; and even the support some intellectuals proffered might have been cold comfort to Rushdie. What did he make of Norman Mailer's professed desire to be assassinated too, so that "our chiefs in the Western world may be finally aroused by our willingness, even though we are selfish creative artists, to be nonetheless martyred in a cause"? As Midge Decter wrote, there is something rather appalling about the way Mailer and his ilk "preened and strutted in their efforts to share in the cachet of someone else's peril."

Rushdie was faced with another problem as well, perhaps, in strictly intellectual terms, the most serious of all. Rushdie's notorious evasiveness, and his insistence on the strictly limited responsibility of the novelist for the voices that people his work, are both consistent with modern literary criticism's de-emphasis of authorial intention as the chief determinant of a text's meaning (a de-emphasis I happen to agree with). But in the *60 Minutes* interview, when Mike Wallace suggested to Rushdie that Muslims had some reason to be angry with him, since he *had* called Muhammad's wives prostitutes, Rushdie said—no evasiveness here—that he had done no such thing. (And he was right. Gibreel Farishta, one of the two main characters in *The Satanic Verses*, has a dream in which some prostitutes *take the names* of Muhammad's wives in order to drum up business. But everyone from Iranian clergymen to Pat Buchanan said Rushdie had insulted Muhammad's wives.) To which Mike Wallace, whose official postmodernist credentials are no doubt now in the mail, replied, "Well, it's in the eye of the beholder, isn't it?" Rushdie, clearly surprised to hear a seventy-year-old American journalist sounding like a newly-minted Ph.D. specializing in reader-response hermeneutics, stammered self-contradictorily, "Well, yes. . . . But if they say that I called the Prophet's wives whores, *I didn't do it.*" Likewise, in the essay in *Imaginary Homelands* that immediately precedes his praise of the novel for its open-ended liberal irony, Rushdie takes pains to point out that the passages of *The Satanic Verses* most offensive to Muslims, which appear in the dreams of Gibreel Farishta, are just dreams, and that

> they are *agonizingly painful to the dreamer.* They are a "nocturnal retribution, a punishment" for his loss of faith. . . . The first purpose of these sequences is not to vilify or "disprove" Islam, but to portray a soul in crisis, to show how the loss of God can destroy a man's life.

These are not questions, they are answers. These are claims, statements about clear and determinate meaning, from an author who now claims the right to have the last word. Rushdie's recourse to such claims, to such an old-fashioned hermeneutic, strongly suggests that liberal irony is a luxury; it is a philosophy for the safe, the wealthy, and the contented. In moments of crisis, when accurate interpretation of a text *matters*, liberal irony goes out the window.

In *Haroun*, as the army of Gup heads into battle, the soldiers argue vociferously with one another about the validity of their cause and the wisdom (or idiocy) of their general; "and such was the freedom allowed to the . . . citizens of Gup, that the old General seemed perfectly happy to listen to these tirades of insults and insubordination without batting an eyelid. In fact, it looked to Haroun as if the General was on many occasions actually provoking such disputes, and then joining in with enthusiastic glee." When Haroun questions the wisdom of this practice, he is treated to a lecture about the virtues of free speech; and soon he discovers that in the end everyone agrees to the General's plans, and in the end they all fight more effectively because they have had the freedom to express themselves. The soldiers/prisoners of Chup, however, whom Khattum-shud forces into silence, break and run at the first opportunity.

For Rushdie, then, free speech and storytelling can liberate the world. Likewise, Richard Rorty believes that open and undogmatic conversation will produce social harmony. Would that it were so. But the assumption which these liberal ironists share is that, at bottom, all people are good and all people have the same values and interests. To put it another way, the ethical foundation of liberal irony is nothing more than an old cliché: If people just sit down and talk about their problems openly and honestly, then all this bad stuff (the threat of nuclear war, international terrorism, global warming) will all go away. But the uproar over *The Satanic Verses* may have suggested to Rushdie that this fundamental assumption does not necessarily hold—that is, that all people are not good, and that some beliefs and values will inevitably compete with one another. Furthermore, it may have suggested to him that when values come into conflict, there is little point in demanding that people resolve the conflict by becoming ironic about what they believe. After all, is the liberal ironist ironic

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about *his* values—freedom of speech, openness, flexibility, toleration? If so, he cannot be liberal; if not, he cannot be an ironist. And as Anthony Gottlieb has written, in an extremely witty and telling review of Rorty's two recent collections of essays, "The Rortyan vision of heaven on earth, in which people merely tell enlightening tales and abjure the search for truth, sounds like a gathering of tipsy old sea dogs swapping dimly remembered stories of past voyages of discovery. If the earlier explorers had all been Rortyan pragmatists, the sea dogs would have had nothing to reminisce about." In short, liberal irony depends for its existence on the maintenance of a series of stable and consistent values and beliefs that are simply too important to be ironic about. That, in my view, was what Rushdie recognized when, in the controversy over *The Satanic Verses*, he dropped the coy is-and-is-not irony in favor of unequivocal declarations about What Is the Case.

But where do you go from liberal irony, from pragmatic storytelling as the replacement for conviction and belief, once you are forced by harsh circumstances to realize that that way of thinking can't support its own weight? If you are Salman Rushdie, perhaps you come to believe that the forceful but evil convictions of the Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers can only be resisted by equally forceful convictions that stake out different and superior moral terrain. And the only body of belief known to Rushdie that is capable of supporting such convictions is Islam; the Ayatollah's hatred is to be countered by a richer understanding of Islam itself. So in the last words of the last essay in *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie says, "What I know of Islam is that tolerance, compassion, and love are at its very heart. I believe that in the weeks and months to come the language of enmity will be replaced by the language of love."

That belief is touching; but unfortunately it is not justified. Each of the one hundred and fourteen *suras* of the Qur'an begins with an appeal to "God, the Compassionate, the Merciful"; but those *suras* do not always advocate mercy, and those who would execute Salman Rushdie can find ample support for their actions in the sacred book. Whether Rushdie will find the comfort and security in Islam that liberal irony could not offer remains to be seen; but it seems clear that the majority of Muslims want him dead. The words of Shabbir Akhtar, of the Bradford (England) Council of Mosques, are chilling in their eloquence:

> Salman Rushdie, the prodigal son of Islam, wishes to return home. And there should be much rejoicing in paradise over such a sinner.
>
> But there is a distant land from which no one returns. It is not that the Muslim father won't forgive. Rather, Rushdie can't find his way home. For there are sins that permanently rust the heart, corrode the mind, and blur the vision.
>
> . . . There are choices that can seal one's fate—even before death intervenes to end both the dilemma and the choice.

I am aware that not all Muslims would agree with this verdict. But I am compelled to point out—could Salman Rushdie ever be interested?—that in one faith, at least, a joyous welcome for the prodigal is never in doubt. F1

On Viewing the Paintings of Bruno Liljefors

How good and fine it would have been, to be out upon the wild loon swells
And watch the sea-eagles coming in;
Or to climb, body lashed by salt sea spray, up
Through the face-lashing spray of pine,
To view through a rift the goshawk's nest, and, hunched over all
Those downy forms, that fierce red eye;
Or to see the glint in the vixen's eyes, pin-hard and bright,
Gemstone green of the finest water,
As she weaves her way through the marsh verdure,
Hard-won duck champed tight and secure:
Essential image both guide and lure.

Craig Payne

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Can Notre Dame Be Saved?

David W. Lutz

I am a member of the United Methodist Church and a graduate student of philosophy at the University of Notre Dame. One might ask why a United Methodist would go to a Roman Catholic university to study philosophy. The answer is, I am at Notre Dame because I cannot study philosophy at a Methodist university. There no longer are any. All that remains is a collection of secular universities that were originally founded by Methodists as Christian universities. The list includes some whose Methodist history is indicated by their names, such as Wesleyan and Southern Methodist. But it also includes a number of schools whose Methodist heritage is unknown even to most Methodists: Emory, Duke, Boston University, Northwestern, Syracuse, Vanderbilt, and the University of Southern California. Some of these universities still have organizational ties to the United Methodist Church, but they are Christian in name only.

I am not the only Protestant in Notre Dame's Philosophy Department. Approximately one-third of the graduate students now studying philosophy at Notre Dame are Protestants who decided to study here rather than elsewhere because of the Christian reputation of Notre Dame's Philosophy Department. The Department's faculty includes not only several of the best Catholic philosophers in the country, but also several of the best Protestant philosophers as well. No other philosophy faculty approaches Notre Dame's in combining high standards of academic excellence with commitment both to Christianity and to a belief in the philosophic importance of Christian faith—whether Catholic *or* Protestant.

I am concerned, however, that the process of secularization that removed the Methodist universities and, before them, most of the Ivy League schools from the ranks of Christian academic institutions is now setting in at Notre Dame. After all, the Methodist schools did not become post-Christian overnight. They abandoned their Christianity gradually, as a result of many decisions made by many people over a period of decades. There are indications that Notre Dame is now heading down that same trail. At the inaugural Mass of Notre Dame's 1954-55 academic year, Fr. Theodore Hesburgh said, "Here is an apostolate that no secular university today can undertake—for they are largely cut off from the tradition of adequate knowledge which comes only through faith in the mind and faith in God, the highest wisdom of Christian philosophy and Catholic theology." In the 1990s, however, the challenge is to prevent Notre Dame from becoming merely one more secular university.

Part of the problem facing Notre Dame is that there are people there who are embarrassed by the fact that it is a Catholic university and are working to hasten the day when it no longer is. But it is not actually these who pose the greatest threat to the Catholic identity of the University. The real danger comes from a much larger group of persons who believe that Notre Dame can strive for ever-higher standards of academic excellence—and use the same criteria of excellence by which the best secular universities in the land are judged to be excellent—without forfeiting the Catholic character of the University.

Some of those who believe that Notre Dame could never cease to be Catholic are not at all surprised that the Protestant schools have lost their Christian identity. But what are the relevant differences? One difference is simply that many of the Protestant universities are older than Notre Dame and have thus had more time to undergo erosion. Another important difference is that, at least until recently, Catholic universities have done a better job of resisting the pressure to adopt liberalism as their governing philosophy.

The influence of liberalism on America's Christian universities has been twofold: first, it has led to the rejection of the belief that there is one correct con-

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ception of the human good and one correct way to pursue human happiness; and second, it has led to acceptance of the belief that government should be concerned with ensuring a context within which individuals can pursue their various freely chosen goods and adjudicating the dispute when one person's pursuit of happiness conflicts with another's, but not with telling people how best to pursue their happiness. At a point in history when the bankruptcy of Communism is no longer deniable, we need to be more alert than ever to the vices of liberal democracy. In a fallen, sinful world, liberal democracy may be the best alternative for structuring political institutions, but it is not our best option for structuring Christian churches and universities.

From my perspective as an outsider on the inside, it appears that many of the problems within the Catholic Church in the United States today are related to the attempt by American Catholics to apply the political system of their government to their Church. I invite all Roman Catholics who would like to belong to a more democratic church to become United Methodists.

The Protestant emphasis on the need for a personal relationship with God, if not balanced by an emphasis on the need to belong to a community of others who are also rightly related to God, can lead to an excessively individualistic understanding of human society. There are clear historical relationships between the Protestant Reformation, the rejection of the Thomistic understanding of the common good, and the growth of liberal democracy. And nowhere is that more true than in this country. The birth of Methodism as a Protestant denomination, distinct from the Church of England, was closely related to the American Revolution. We severed our ties not only with the King of England but also with the Archbishop of Canterbury. And the organization of the new church was influenced by that of the new government.

Today most Methodists neither know nor care what their bishops believe about morality and all are free to attempt by democratic methods to change any of the church's moral positions they do not like. Every presidential election year we have our own political convention to determine democratically what will be right and wrong for the next four years. At the 1988 General Conference of the United Methodist Church in St. Louis, legislation affirming that "we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching" was adopted by a 765-181 vote of the delegates. The gay rights lobby was unsuccessful—for now. What was most significant about this vote, however, is not that a moral position inconsistent with Christian Scripture and nearly two millennia of Christian tradition was defeated overwhelmingly, but rather that the question was even brought up for a vote in the first place.

The reason liberal democracy may be appropriate for our civil society is that as a pluralistic society, we have little hope of reaching complete agreement concerning the human good and the proper way to pursue happiness. But among Christians, there ought to be good reason to hope we can agree on the main points, if not in every detail, about what constitutes the good and how we should pursue happiness. All Christians are called to holiness. Having that much in common is infinitely more significant than any differences in our understanding of that call.

There is an historical, although not a necessary logical, relationship between liberal democracy and the moral anarchy of contemporary America. The step from "we should all be free to decide what is good for us" to "what we decide is good for us *is* good for us" is an all-too-easy one to take. So is the step from "there is no good common to everyone" to "there is no good." We have transferred the beliefs and practices of liberalism not only from the political realm to the ecclesiastical, but also to the moral. The result is the combination of ethical subjectivism, relativism, emotivism, and nihilism so much in fashion in Western democracies today. (Of course, one cannot consistently be a subjectivist, a relativist, an emotivist, and a nihilist; but it is also fashionable today to be unconcerned about logical consistency in matters of religion and morality.)

As American Catholics bring liberalism into their Church and academic institutions, they bring with it the moral confusion that usually accompanies it. Perhaps simply noting that the absence of moral authority was once considered deplorable can help us understand how far we have regressed. At least one description of ancient Israel sounds very much like modern America: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6, 21:25).

A battle for the soul of the University of Notre Dame is being waged, then, between traditional Christians and people whose *Weltanschauung* is rooted primarily in the Enlightenment. I will use "secular humanism" as a label for the post-Enlightenment, nontheistic faith of the large and growing number of Westerners who have abandoned Judaism or Christianity without adopting another species of organized religion. Although "secular humanism" is a term used most frequently by Protestant Fundamentalists, it was Justice Hugo Black—in delivering the opinion of the United States Supreme Court in a 1961 case, *Torcaso v. Watkins*—who distinguished between "religions based on a belief in the existence of God" and "religions founded on different beliefs," such as "Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, Secular Humanism, and others." In 1980 Paul Kurtz, a SUNY-Buffalo philosopher, published a "Secular Humanist Declaration," which was signed by a number of prominent scholars. In the Introduction to his Declaration, Kurtz shows an understanding of the relationships among

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secular humanism and the Enlightenment, (liberal) democracy, and the Catholic Church:

> Secularism and humanism were eclipsed in Europe during the Dark Ages, when religious piety eroded humankind's confidence in its own powers to solve human problems. They reappeared in force during the Renaissance . . . and their influence can be found in the eighteenth century in the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment. Democratic secular humanism has creatively flowered in modern times with the growth of freedom and democracy. . . . Regrettably, we are today faced with a variety of anti-secularist trends: the reappearance of dogmatic authoritarian religions; fundamentalist, literalist, and doctrinaire Christianity . . . the reassertion of orthodox authority by the Roman Catholic papal hierarchy. . . .

To see how far down the path to secular humanism the University of Notre Dame has already traveled, one need only read the official statements made about the University by its administrators. The term "values" appears frequently in these statements. For example, the 1990-91 edition of the University's *Fact Sheet*, a widely distributed, six-panel brochure, includes the following passage: "Notre Dame has a unique spirit. It is traditional, yet open to change. It is dedicated to religious belief no less than scientific knowledge. It has always stood for values in a world of fact. It has kept faith with Father Sorin's vision." I seriously doubt that Fr. Sorin—the founder of the University—ever envisioned a dichotomy between value and fact. It would be difficult to imagine a vision further removed from the Roman Catholic moral tradition.

Among the philosophers whose works contain the seeds of this dichotomy is David Hume: "If we take in our hand any volume—of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance—let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames; for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion."

The clearest—and therefore most clearly absurd—articulation of this dichotomy in its fully developed form is given by another British philosopher, A. J. Ayer: "Since the expression of a value judgment is not a proposition, the question of truth or falsehood does not here arise. . . . In saying that a certain type of action is right or wrong, I am not making any factual statement." Not surprisingly, Ayer was one of the signers of Paul Kurtz's "Secular Humanist Declaration."

C. S. Lewis' recognition of a fact-value dichotomy within an argument against ethical subjectivism in *The Abolition of Man* has no doubt contributed something to the frequency with which "values" is used by both Catholics and Protestants who want to defend "traditional values." But Christians should never accept a dichotomy between facts and values. To say, for example, that Hitler and Stalin were evil men or that we should work to relieve the suffering of the poor is *both* to make a value judgment *and* to state a fact. Many people would no doubt disagree; but how could a Christian do so?

My point in calling attention to use of the term "values" in Notre Dame documents is not to criticize the anonymous author of a public relations brochure, but rather to point out the depth of the confusion concerning ethics at Notre Dame today. This is more than an issue of technical terminology. The leaders of the University pride themselves on the fact that "we believe in values." The implication is that persons at secular-humanist universities do not. But of course everyone has ethical beliefs and every university offers ethics courses. To the extent that there is any significant moral difference between Notre Dame and non-Christian universities, it is not that Notre Dame "believes in values" and the others do not, but rather that our values are different from theirs. Our objective should be not merely to teach values, but to teach values radically different from and superior to those taught at secular universities.

But, of course, we cannot say that Christian values (or virtues) are better than, for example, Kurtz's "democratic secular humanist values" unless we believe ethical statements are factual statements and are either true or false. And it is far from clear that those who administer or teach at Notre Dame believe that. In fact, the school is home to a large, though shrinking, group of people who hold traditional Catholic beliefs on specific issues such as abortion and euthanasia, but who at the same time hold many beliefs about ethics that are indistinguishable from the subjectivism, relativism, emotivism, and nihilism of secular America.

Despite the tendency at Notre Dame toward self-congratulation about commitment to values, undergraduates are not even required to take an ethics course. There is more emphasis on community service than on classroom instruction—an emphasis entirely consistent with the belief widely accepted in our society that values, while they may be created and clarified, can be neither true nor false. If there is no fact of the matter, there is little point in assigning ethics a central role in the formal curriculum. Notre Dame deserves praise for the many opportunities it gives students to volunteer their time. But to understand moral education primarily in terms of extracurricular activities is to reject the Catholic moral tradition and to adopt the model someone has called "value-added education." The difference between a Catholic university and a secular-humanist university with a Newman Center should be more than a difference of scale.

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The gap between the rhetoric and the reality of ethics education at Notre Dame is qualitative as well as quantitative. Not only are there fewer ethics courses than the value-talk would suggest, but little attention is paid to which values are taught. Some of the ethics courses offered at Notre Dame are consistent with Catholic moral teachings and some are not: to maintain that certain moral theories are better than others might offend someone. This diversity is in keeping with the liberal doctrine that all values are created equal. But liberalism is not really neutral with regard to *all* values. Those who tell us that morality is relative are usually quick to add that, because morality is relative, we should tolerate those whose moral beliefs differ from our own. There are some moral absolutes after all. In our attempt to be committed to ethics without being narrow-minded concerning whose ethics we are committed to, we have actually replaced the four cardinal *virtues* of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance with the four cardinal *values* of openness, equality, tolerance, and diversity.

To suggest that there should be standards of quality control for ethics courses at a Catholic university is, of course, to enter the debate concerning "academic freedom." I am no opponent of academic freedom; but I believe Christians should not let civil libertarians and secular humanists decide for us what it means to be free. I find it incredible that a commitment to Christianity is supposed to be irrelevant to an understanding of academic freedom.

The well-known distinction between negative and positive freedom is helpful at this point. Negative freedom is freedom from restraint; positive freedom is freedom to pursue a worthwhile objective. It is the distinction made, *mutatis mutandis,* in biblical passages such as Romans 6:16-23. We can choose between freedom from divine authority and freedom with regard to righteousness. In neither case are we absolutely free. To be free from God's authority is to be a slave to sin. To be free with regard to righteousness, on the other hand, requires submission to God's authority.

The political freedom of liberalism is negative political freedom, just as the academic freedom of secular humanism is negative academic freedom. While it may be desirable to allow a high degree of negative political freedom in our country, academic freedom at a Christian university should be positive academic freedom. If academic freedom at a Catholic university means the freedom to teach anything whatsoever, even if it contradicts the teaching of the Catholic Church, what distinguishes a Catholic university from any other kind of university? To answer the question merely in terms of having a clergyman as president, a crucifix in every classroom, and a chapel in every residence hall is to abandon a rich intellectual tradition.

True academic freedom is not freedom from ecclesiastical authority, but freedom to speak the truth. And Christians have an understanding of truth not shared with secular scholars. Yet Notre Dame's description of "academic freedom and associated responsibilities" in its *Faculty Handbook* offers no indication that it is shaped by a distinctively Christian understanding of freedom. There are, according to the *Handbook*, three principles of academic freedom: "freedom to teach and to learn according to one's obligation, vision, and training; freedom to publish the results of one's study or research; and freedom to speak and write on public issues as a citizen." The first of the associated responsibilities is "respectful allowance for the exercise of these freedoms by others." Many people believe that academic freedom is "value-free." But Notre Dame's statement clearly assumes liberal values. Each individual has a right to the greatest degree of (negative) freedom consistent with respecting the right of every other individual to the same degree of (negative) freedom. Far from being value-neutral, academic freedom at Notre Dame is rooted in the four cardinal values.

Some people at Notre Dame believe that we cannot have a genuine university in the modern world without laissez-faire research and teaching—that a university must be a "marketplace of ideas." Professors, it is maintained, are not in the business of sheltering students from intellectual challenges to their faith. I grant that one of the things a Catholic university should do is introduce students to intellectual positions opposed to Christianity. But to place a higher priority on challenging students' faith than on teaching them how to defend their faith against attack is simply imprudent. Most Notre Dame undergraduates arrive at the University without knowing the basics of their own moral tradition—and most graduate in the same condition. To attack faith without first nurturing it is like teaching people to swim by dropping them in the middle of the ocean.

I am not arguing that Christian universities should have less academic freedom than non-Christian universities. On the contrary, I am claiming that only genuinely Christian universities are truly free. One of the roles of a Christian university is that of exploring ways to further the development of the Christian tradition. But there is a difference between working within a tradition to help it progress and stepping outside it in order to attack it.

I am saying nothing new. The Second Vatican Council document *Gaudium et Spes* emphasizes the need for scholars to be free, but states that this freedom must remain "within the limits of morality and the general welfare." And *Ex Corde Ecclesiae,* the 1990 Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities, states that academic freedom must remain "within the confines of the truth and the common good." In order to determine whether a university conforms to these documents, some system of identifying the limits of

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morality and the confines of truth—and of keeping a university within these boundaries—is required.

Until relatively recently, those systems were external to Catholic universities. In his recently published autobiography, Fr. Hesburgh describes his efforts to pull Notre Dame and other Catholic universities out from under the Church hierarchy in order to preserve their "autonomy and academic freedom." But if a university is liberated from external ecclesiastical authority, an internal system of discipline must be instituted in order to ensure that its teaching remains consistent with the tradition to which it belongs. There is no such internal system at the University of Notre Dame today. Because of the decision in the 1960s to transfer control of Notre Dame to a lay board of trustees, the Congregation of Holy Cross is no longer in a position to preserve the Catholic character of the University. The problem today is that no one else has accepted that responsibility. We believe in values but it doesn't much matter which ones.

Fr. Hesburgh clearly understands the need to restrict autonomy in some areas. He explains in his autobiography how he brought the "autonomous fiefdom" of legendary football coach Frank Leahy under his control. But why is "bringing the athletics department to heel" so much more important than establishing quality-control measures for the academic departments in order to prevent Notre Dame from becoming a post-Christian university?

Discussions of academic freedom are naturally closely related to discussions of academic excellence. Many of the decisions that are contributing to the secularization of Notre Dame are being made in the name of excellence. The arguments go something like this: If Notre Dame is to become and to be recognized as a truly great Catholic university, our faculty must include many outstanding scholars. It would be desirable to appoint outstanding scholars who are also committed Christians, but we cannot become a great university by appointing second-rate Christian scholars instead of first-rate non-Christian scholars. Therefore, we should hire the best scholars money can buy, without considering their religious and moral beliefs. Of course Notre Dame is and always will be Catholic. What could be more absurd than suggesting that Notre Dame might someday cease to be a Catholic university?

This is precisely the type of reasoning responsible for Notre Dame's drift toward secular humanism. Because the salaries of Notre Dame's entry-level faculty positions are relatively high, many applicants respond to announcements of openings. And because most of these scholars are not Christians, a policy of disregarding the religious and moral beliefs of applicants will result in a predominantly non-Christian faculty. In short, to decide that religious commitment is irrelevant to hiring decisions is to decide that Notre Dame will cease to be a Catholic university. What does it profit a university to gain worldwide recognition as an excellent research institution and forfeit its soul?

No one connected with the institution could do anything but endorse with enthusiasm the idea of working to make Notre Dame an excellent university. But how could it become a "Catholic Princeton" without ceasing to be Catholic? Besides, why should we let non-Christians decide for us what it means to be excellent? Are Christian standards of excellence inferior to secular standards? Roman Catholics are in a better position than anyone else to look to their own intellectual tradition for guidance in understanding what it means to attain academic excellence.

One might ask, By what right does a Protestant criticize a Catholic university for giving up its Catholic identity? Are not people like myself a major part of the problem? Indeed, if Notre Dame were to become so concerned about preserving its Catholic character that it expelled Protestants, I could accept that decision. It would be much better *for Protestants* to have one American university so committed to Catholicism that it excluded Protestants than to have one more American university so committed to what is laughably called "cultural diversity" that it excluded no one. Still, anyone who cares about preserving the Catholic identity of Notre Dame can recognize that if the greatest threat to the Catholic character of the University were Protestantism, the situation would be a far happier one *for Catholics* than is the present situation. In fact, the leaders of Notre Dame, when attempting to measure the Catholicity of the faculty, would do well to move beyond a binary distinction between those who have Roman Catholic baptismal certificates and those who do not. The religious and moral beliefs of some Protestants are much closer to Rome than are those of many nominal baptized-but-unconverted Catholics.

What every Christian academic institution needs is not merely faculty members who are Christians in some minimal sense, but scholars who take their Christian faith so seriously that they believe it should be integrated with their scholarship. To believe that whether or not scholars are Christian is irrelevant to the excellence of their scholarship is to reject a rich philosophical and theological tradition and to adopt a form of the fideism for which many Catholics justly criticize many Protestants. The point is not that Christian universities should never enlist the services of non-Christian scholars. But Christian universities should look beyond how many journal articles potential professors are likely to publish. Notre Dame should appoint only excellent scholars; but we should realize that we have more than one option when it comes to understanding academic excellence.

Notre Dame cannot remain indefinitely at some position between Roman Catholicism and secular humanism—nor should those of us who teach there hope that it might. Such a compromise is self-contradictory and unstable. Should Notre Dame become a post-Christian university, it will remain one.

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After the momentum passes a certain point, there will be no return, even if many members of the Notre Dame community then see and regret what they have allowed to happen. The Methodist universities are not only lost; they are irretrievably lost. Moreover, if Notre Dame becomes a post-Christian university, it probably will not be a very good one. How, for instance, could it compete with the best secular institutions in the land without the financial support now coming from people who precisely believe it to be a Catholic university?

I am not suggesting that I have a simple solution to the problems confronting Notre Dame. I am arguing neither that instituting academic discipline would be an easy corrective to the secularization of the University nor that we should attempt to turn the clock back several decades. I am more concerned with Notre Dame's future than with its past. Most Christian academic institutions see themselves as forced to choose between Christian commitment and academic excellence. Some Catholic and Protestant colleges have chosen the former. The majority of Christian colleges and universities have chosen the latter. I believe that Notre Dame should choose both. Perhaps no university has been both genuinely Christian and truly excellent since the University of Paris in the thirteenth century. But if Notre Dame is interested in carrying on the tradition of the University of Paris, it certainly will not achieve that objective by emulating Harvard, Yale, and Princeton.

In addition, I am mindful that adopting the type of freedom I am proposing would most likely bring Notre Dame into conflict with the American Association of University Professors' understanding of academic freedom. And because of current or future interpretations of the First Amendment, the school would perhaps have problems with governmental funding. Whatever might prove to be the solution to these or other problems, it would certainly not lie in conforming to the standards of non-Christian universities.

In any case, if positive action to halt and reverse the secularization of the University of Notre Dame is not taken soon, the question will be not whether, but when, Notre Dame will be a Christian university in precisely the sense that Northwestern University is now Christian. The leaders of the University—faculty, administrators, and trustees—have a responsibility of stewardship to pass on to future generations the heritage of faith at Notre Dame.

If Notre Dame is indeed a Catholic university, there should be no hesitation on the part of its leaders to state that moral truth is not a matter of individual taste, that the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church will not be compromised on the Notre Dame campus, and that anyone not interested in teaching at a Christian university should teach elsewhere—perhaps at one of the formerly Methodist universities. Merely to recite platitudes about "values," thereby implying that Notre Dame students are being educated at a Christian university without taking steps to ensure that they are, is to commit—no other term seems to suit—fraud. FT

Winter Smoke

From the stack outside the window's frame,
White smoke, mostly steam, breaks hard across
A bright blue square of winter sky.
It tumbles in gusts, and its knots untie
Then vanish in air.

They are strangely calming, these forms above
The skeletal trees, the drifted roofs,
Above the houses where lives
Go on, those finally unknowable other lives
So quiet and white.

The shapes blow by and do not resemble
Faces or angels. They swell, arc, reach, disperse,
And pantomime in empty sky
The selves inside
That billow and pass.

Robert Schultz

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Writing Christian History

Robin Darling Young

THE OXFORD ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY. Edited by JOHN MCMANNERS. *Oxford University Press. 724 pp. $45 cloth.*

This is a handsome book, and a weighty one, too, at over seven hundred glossy pages. But was it necessary? Should the general reader trouble himself to know the history of the church?

The answer is, that without a grasp of the history of the Christian church, no thoughtful person can hope to understand the spiritual, moral—even the geopolitical—world in which he lives. The reasons for this are at least two. First, the church was the dynamic force transforming the classical world from Roman Empire to Christendom, just as the church's dismemberment dynamically transformed Europe in the sixteenth century. Second, Christianity continues to manifest a dynamic vitality in appearing, renewed and changed, in various parts of the world, where it may again be the agent of change—as it was in Eastern Europe in 1989.

Since, then, a knowledge of at least the outline of Christian history is essential, every personal library should have at least a one- or two-volume history of Christianity. Whether the *Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* is the most useful treatment to own and read is a matter that will depend upon the predilections, patience, and tolerance of the reader.

John McManners, a historian, has assembled eighteen other professional historians to write the chapters of this book. All but two are English, and the majority—ten—write from Oxbridge, where many of the chairs are still under ecclesiastical (Anglican) control. Three are themselves ecclesiastical officials, two being no less than bishops.

The editor has aimed, he tells us, to avoid partisan or confessional opinions. As he writes in the Introduction, "The writers of the various chapters of this book belong to the confraternity of professional historians of the 'scientific' kind; whatever as individuals they believe about human destiny, whatever spiritual contacts they expect or do not expect in their own lives, they write, within their lights, impartially, with detachment from their convictions." And later: "A religion is a social institution and, as such, a routine subject for analysis. . . . Both Christianity and the church are the subject of the historian's investigations." This means that the reader can be assured that the book is pure of sectarian or theological contamination as it follows the by-now quaint-sounding criteria of a history objective and scientific. Perhaps the traditional allegiance of the authors (many of whom are practicing Christians of one stripe or another) operating under the strictures of secularist history accounts for the cautious sound of McManners' Introduction as well as the conservative structure of the book—for despite its eschewal of "private" beliefs, the book for the most part still adheres to the ecclesiastical version of the history of "great men." It describes the actions of notable leaders and thinkers, although it occasionally chronicles popular Christian religiosity or opinion where the historical sources are available.

The book is divided into three sections. The first proceeds chronologically, giving an account of Christianity's growth from earliest times to 1800. The second discusses the church in particular areas of the world from 1800-1990. The third, interestingly, departs from McManners' cautious viewpoint and *does* try to assign meaning to the history of Christianity. This section, "Christianity Today and Tomorrow," contains four essays on belief, community, moral theology and social ethics, and the future of Christianity. Here the book moves beyond history to theology, journalism, and, finally, to prophecy. Indeed, in this final section the essays are openly opinionated: Maurice Wiles expresses theological preferences and Bryan Wilson, despite his sociological approach, editorializes about "genuine community."

The book has many attractive passages, and whole chapters are occasionally distinguished for comprehensiveness or freshness of approach. Henry Mayr-Harting's chapter on the "age of conversion" in the West (the former "Dark Ages") is particularly clear and well-stated, and Jeremy Jons' essay, "Christianity and Islam," is a useful orientation to the theological challenge of Islam as well as to the more familiar political and military threats of Muslims to the late-antique and medieval West. McManners' own contribution, the chapter on the Enlightenment, is particularly good, arguing that Christians of the period (1600-1800) continued the efforts of the Reformation to make religion sink in—to render it less a formal, social obligation and more a spiritual and personal reality. Another fascinating chapter is Frederick Pike's on Latin America since 1800, wherein the suggestion

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is offered that liberation theology's "ahistorical" character comes from its Neoplatonist strain—ironically, one of the most radically transcendental philosophies available as a basis for religious life and theology.

The *Illustrated History*, so its jacket proclaims, is the "uniquely authoritative history . . . for the general reader." And certainly, the book appeals to the hand and eye of a reader looking for an easily digestible meal of ecclesiastical history. The editor has, as a rule, not let more than two pages pass without an illustration and accompanying caption. The pages are glossy and restful white space abounds, surrounding the smoothly written text. The authors of individual chapters are seasoned scholars whose prose has been edited into a mellow whole.

Like another well-intentioned volume of church history, *The Christian World* (1982), this is the *National Geographic* version of church history, or, to follow the culinary metaphor, the *Gourmet* magazine edition of it. It is sweet or savory, nouvelle or ethnic, depending on the chapter, but served up, above all, to appeal—not to burden or, unfortunately, nourish. Missing are troublesome discussions of primary documents and their significance, of contested interpretations of events (or of interpretive theories themselves), or of the book's predecessors in the long and illustrious genre of ecclesiastical history.

This volume, like others in the Oxford Illustrated series, is a kind of denouement of church history, just as the volume on the classics represents a popularized handbook of classical studies for those without firsthand acquaintance with the discipline. These books give the appearance of learning, and the satiated feeling of a meal, without actually forcing the reader to suffer through preparation, cooking, and chewing.

That aside, the present volume cannot be considered a really comprehensive reference book: it is uneven in its coverage of the great personages, events, and documents of the history of the church and selective in its attention to popular Christianity. At the same time, it is not basic enough to be a reliable introduction to the field and to the body of knowledge that is church history or the history of Christianity.

Some readers, though, may be encouraged by the *Illustrated History* to look once more at, listen harder to, and ponder the meaning of the men, women, and events that have made our own religious world.

II

The pattern of interaction between the history of the church and secular history took shape in the early fourth century. When the later Roman Empire, from Constantine in the early fourth century to Justinian in the mid-sixth, learned to live in institutions formed by, if not always true to, the Christian vision, the population of Europe and parts of Asia were fated to become in degrees Christian too. Once Christianity ceased to be a sometimes-persecuted, illicit religion, and by degrees became the state religion of the Empire, the religions of "Hollones" (pagans) and Jews became, increasingly, tolerated but private affairs (as that of the Christians would later be in Muslim lands). Now culture and civilization centered around Christ and his church; literature, political ideals, mores, and innermost imagination were transmogrified, not uniformly and transculturally but according to how individual cultures—whether of Armenia, or Nubis, or Kievan Rus'—already had expressed themselves in their pre-Christian past.

Such are the more obvious reasons for a knowledge of Christian history: the history of the West, considered *in toto* or by region, is incomprehensible without it. Any tourist in any European city knows this. Yet there is another reason for learning the history of the church, which is that Christianity is itself a religion in which history has its own profound meaning as an expression of supernatural purpose. Christopher Dawson wrote that "Christianity transfers the meaning of history from the outer world of historic events to the inner world of spiritual change . . . [with] the latter . . . conceived as the dynamic element in history and as a real world-transforming power." History, on this classical Christian view, has meaning that is veiled, yet may partially yield to prudent investigation.

Partisanship has always been part of the writing of church history. In this, as in other disciplines, critical scholarship and authorial ability have coexisted with the partisan viewpoint. Church historians have often been apologists, more or less frankly. Yet their works also serve a higher, if less well proclaimed, function: they explain religious change on a massive scale, change in what it has now (following the French) become fashionable to call *mentalité*. Early church historians beginning with Eusebius, that revisionist of ecclesiastical history for the court of Constantine, wrote in opposition to their pagan counterparts to describe the rise of Christianity as the proof of God's providence, and to demolish the pagan notion of fate as controlling historical events. Presumably such an approach had the effect not only of controverting pagan arguments against Christianity, but also of combatting the long-lasting attachment among Christian converts to astral determinism and magic—a form of belief that appears repeatedly in the use of Christian amulets and charms on the popular level.

Not long after the beginnings of Christian historical writing, ecclesiastical history also began to serve the purpose of justifying sectarian differences. In the early fifth century, the Arian Philostorgius wrote a history of the church to justify the viewpoint of a group that, in the mid-fourth century, looked like it might come to dominate Christian theology. Similarly, the fifth- and sixth-century historians Cosmas Indicopleustes (a Nestorian), Zacharias Rhetor and John of Ephesus (Monophysites), and Evagrius Scholasticus

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(a Chalcedonian) all wrote their histories in part to justify the views of their particular movements, and in the process collected documents attesting to the foundation of those movements as separate churches sprung from the Great Church of the fourth century.

At the same time, church histories also lent themselves to fuller theological expressions. An apposite comparison could be made between the seven turgid books of the *Historia adversus paganos* (417) of Orosius—a universal history ending with the triumph of the church over the pagan empire—and the magnificent *City of God* of Augustine. In the latter work, Augustine attempted to put forward not just a controversialist view to refute pagan charges that the conversion of the Empire had led to its downfall, but a philosophy and theology of history. In it he traced the interwoven, but differently destined, tales of two cities, the City of God and City of Man, in order to refute not only pagan charges against the church but also that naive Christian optimism which held that the visible church was to be identified with the kingdom of heaven. Augustine's work, however, is unique in the early history of ecclesiastical history. Far more prevalent was the viewpoint, expressed in the Latin West as well as the Greek East, that the history of the kingdom of God was to be identified with the history of the Christian *imperium* or *basileia*. The nation and the church, in these church histories, melded into a two-sided whole in which God's handiwork was visible and identifiable.

This viewpoint dominated the works of medieval church historians, East and West, with the interesting exceptions of those churches which had separated themselves from Byzantium, or had been separated from it by force of Muslim arms. It was God's work, according to Bede (d. 735), to have brought the English peoples into the church of Christ—rather, the church of Rome—and Gregory of Tours (d. 594) took a similar position with regard to the Franks. Interestingly, the early medieval kingdoms of the West had largely abandoned universal histories in their accounts of the history of the church; these were largely local stories of bishops, petty kings, and princes, with varying degrees of awareness of events in churches outside the ethnic domains.

In the East it was different. Despite the Byzantine church's steadily shrinking size throughout the medieval period, its historians continued to take a cosmic point of view, regarding the patriarch of Constantinople as the center of the Christian world and the Byzantine Emperor as God's earthly viceroy. Here they were following a precedent established long ago by Eusebius (sometimes even labelled the "Eusebian" view of church history) and reaffirmed by the Emperor Justinian himself. Farther to the east, of course, church historians rejected the imperialist interpretation of church history because they felt that their churches had been betrayed by imperial decrees and by "ecumenical" councils sponsored by "heretical" emperors. Thus Armenian Christian historians wrote the history of the church from a national point of view, with the special task of writing their histories to flatter one or another leading feudal family, and Syriac-speaking church historians, if they were Monophysites, wrote from the point of view that Chalcedon and the Byzantine church were a catastrophe (or, if they were Nestorians, from the view that the Byzantine church had no jurisdiction in non-Roman realms).

Although the writing of ecclesiastical history continued in the later medieval period, it was a comparatively minor and regional literature. Not until the rise of Renaissance humanism and the disruption of the reforming movements did church history once again become an important way of understanding the changes that had come about in a once-familiar religious world. The landscape at the end of the sixteenth century was at once familiar and completely altered by the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* (i.e., the religion of the realm follows the religion of its ruler). The church was still marked by regional characteristics, but no longer was it led by the Bishop of Rome, and no longer were religious practices and beliefs similar from one part of Europe to another. Although sudden changes had sundered the reforming churches from the Catholic Church, it remained for historians to perform again the task of explaining and justifying religious change.

The most famous cases of such massive church-historical undertakings are the Lutheran Centuriators, authors of the *Magdeburg Centuries*, and the Catholic Caesar Cardinal Baronius, who wrote his twelve-volume *Annales Ecclesiastici* at the instance of St. Philip Neri in order to refute the *Centuries*. The Centuriators, six historians led by Mathias Flacius Illyricus, produced both an apology for Lutheranism and the changes it had set in motion among Christians and a condemnation of the Roman church as corrupt, even Satanic. Baronius labored from 1568 to 1607 to produce his *Annales* as a rejoinder, and even so did not get farther chronologically than the end of the twelfth century. Both works were composed as official church histories, that is, to identify the true church and expose her enemies as false claimants to the title. Each took the view, hallowed since Eusebius, that the primitive apostolic church had preserved whole the intentions of Jesus—who had himself warned of the divisions that would ensue when heresy would penetrate and corrupt. Yet later impostors had corrupted the church; the major difference of opinion between Lutherans and Catholics was as to their identity and the date of their corruptions. Thus the sixteenth-century church historians maintained the view of their patristic and medieval predecessors. But they also, unwittingly, set the agenda for church historians up through World War II and, arguably, the decade of the 1960s.

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Unbeknownst to Illyricus and Baronius, they were not writing histories of the universal church—they were writing denominational church histories. With the proliferation of churches and sects following the Reformation and its divisions, each church needed its accompanying historical justification as well as—somewhat more innocently—certain special information that would be of less interest to nonmembers of that particular church. Now it was not the national or ethnic church histories of the medieval period but denominational church history that was the dominant genre. And although they adopted the critical-historical approaches developed after the eighteenth century, following von Ranke, Mohler, and Semler, ecclesiastical historians tended to cultivate their own gardens.

This approach is familiar to anyone who has taught church history in a denominational institution, and is familiarly called the "railroad train" method. Among Catholics, it has been common to chronicle the development of the church in part by noting, at specific dates, which group disembarked at this or that stop—never to be seen or heard from again. Thus the Monophysites disappeared after 451, the Greeks after 1054 (though they pop up again at the Council of Florence), the Lutherans (after considerable annoyance) after 1530, the Old Catholics after Vatican I, and so forth. Anglicans, Lutherans, Mennonites—all have had their own versions of the train, with disembarking passengers varying accordingly.

III

Ecclesiastical history is still taught in some places in this way, but it is not very often written in this way. The isolated and self-confident denominational church historian has been replaced, or will soon be replaced, almost universally by a figure of a different sort. Beginning in nondenominational or public institutions, and influenced by changes in the historical craft more generally, church history has almost entirely given way to the history of Christianity. No longer does the subject have to be, verifiably, the True Church; the history of Christianity may deal with any and all individuals or groups calling themselves Christian. No longer does the historian assume that the hand of God has specially guided his own denomination, whether embattled or triumphant; in fact, God's hand has become a fainter and fainter presence over the past 150 years of ecclesiastical history-writing. If the historian discerns God's hand, he had better do so quietly. Instead, questions of providence, authentic development, and orthodoxy have been bracketed, for the most part, or ceded to denominational polemicists. The historian of Christianity often cultivates a small and specialized field, well aware of developments in nonreligious history, and eschews the assignment of divine praise or blame as obscurantism, at best. This task it leaves for ecclesiastical triumphalists—and thus the remarks of McManners cited earlier.

This new form of the genre, although it is less accessible, and sloppier, then the old-fashioned church history descended from Illyricus and Baronius, has the virtue of displaying wider coverage. Descending sometimes to the faddish, it has spawned subspecializations and sometimes egregious excursions into the interpretive wilderness. Yet it is here to stay, and the *Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* is a good example of both its defects and its strengths. FT

Courtesy

First snow falls in kind
agreement to timeless ways.
Gratia plena.

Our Lady of Care
is a kindly countenance
sad as autumn frost.

Faithful tears reclaim
gardens brought to graceless ruin
by wishing wells of sin.

Frederick S. Gilson

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Books In Review

A Communitarian Lament

THE GOOD SOCIETY. By ROBERT N. BELLAH, RICHARD MADSEN, WILLIAM M. SULLIVAN, ANN SWIDLER, and STEPHEN M. TIPTON. *Knopf. 333 pp. $25.*

Reviewed by **Stanley Hauerwas**

THE GOOD SOCIETY is a sequel to these authors' celebrated book, *Habits of the Heart. Habits* was a cultural event—an "academic" book that became a best-seller. It did so, I think, because the book gave voice to the dis-ease many feel about their lives in today's world. Robert Bellah and his coauthors helped people see how their private hurts are often the result of publicly determined harms.

In *Habits of the Heart* the authors focused on individuals in order to exhibit what they regard as the corrosive individualism that is destroying our lives. The power of that book derived from interviews with people telling their stories and revealing their pains. *The Good Society*, in contrast, focuses on institutions and patterned ways of social life. Bellah et al. focus on government, education, and religion. This focus makes *The Good Society* a good deal less lively than *Habits of the Heart* precisely because institutions are not so readily narrated as are individual lives.

The authors' argument remains much the same as in *Habits of the Heart*. Noting that we live through institutions, they suggest that the institutions through which we currently live are antithetical to our deepest moral commitments. They focus on particular individuals in government, education, and religion in an attempt to make their contentions concrete. The argument of *The Good Society* is that Americans are people determined by a Lockean political culture—that is, one which emphasizes individual freedom and pursuit of individual influence—yet we are determined by a most un-Lockean economy and government. We have the illusion we can control our fate through individual economic opportunity, but we are in fact controlled by the very institutions that allegedly made our "freedom" possible. The institutions through which we sought freedom have ironically become our fate.

Bellah and his colleagues contend that the Lockean ideal of the autonomous individual was originally embedded in a complex moral ecology that included the family and the church on the one hand, and on the other a vigorous public sphere in which economic initiative was expected to engender public spirit. In the eighteenth century this synthesis produced a society that still operated on a humanly intelligible scale. At that time we still had the possibility of creating a politics of cultivation, a politics that would engender community, but over time we have instead developed a politics of exploitation. We have developed, that is, a world in which individual accumulation, measured in monetary terms, became disengaged from other social goods and as a result has become an all-consuming passion. Accordingly, institutions had to be created to secure cooperation between people who shared nothing in common except the presumption that we ought to pursue our own interests.

THE AUTHORS provide many examples of the sense of helplessness generated among individuals in a bureaucratically formed world. Government is increasingly shaped by criteria of efficiency established by the great high priest of that value, the modern social scientist. It seldom occurs to those so trained that there might be social goods other than what is calculable. Thus an economist at the Environmental Protection Agency, when asked "What about the theory that human life is priceless?" answered, "We have no data to support that."

Government presumably by and for the people ends up a government by experts because a government formed by people as excessively individualistic as contemporary Americans are would seem to be ungovernable. We are left each appealing to this right or that right with no way to resolve conflicts between competing rights. Indeed rights language is more an indication of our problem than a path to its solution.

Bellah and his coauthors write as avowed communitarians. They are communitarians, that is, "if philosophical liberals are those who believe that all our problems can be solved by autonomous individuals, a market economy, and a procedural state, whereas communitarians believe that more substantive ethical identities and a more active participation in a democratic polity are necessary for the functioning of any decent society." Like the social gospelers at the beginning of this century, Bellah and his colleagues call for the democratization of our economy. They desire not simply a better distribution of income, but, like the Catholic Bishops, they want as well an increase in participation of everyone in a healthy economy. They want, in short, the creation of a genuine public sphere.

The authors resist the suggestion that this call for a greater sense of community and public participation is idealistic. Drawing on Walter Lippmann and John Dewey, they argue that we still possess rich resources for the reconstitution of our lives socially. They point out that we are in fact increasingly bound together in interdependent forms of life, facing common problems that require common solutions. Moreover, we share as Americans, despite our differences, overlapping cultural traditions that can

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be a rich resource for the articulation of a common good.

The Good Society ends with an appeal for a democracy of attention rather than distraction. The authors rightly argue that most current politics is designed to distract us by creating seductive fantasies. To have a politics of attention, they suggest, we need people who can attend to the concrete needs of families and neighborhoods, of schools, museums, and other forms of cultural life. Such people must learn to enjoy the difference of others as enhancing their own lives.

IT IS tempting to dismiss this call for a democracy of attention as a nostalgic retreat to a nineteenth-century, small-town, WASP America. That is clearly not what the authors want, but in the absence of concrete proposals by them it is hard to see what their sense of democracy really entails. My criticism is not that Bellah and his colleagues are utopian, but that they are not nearly utopian enough; or, to use terms I prefer, the problem is not that they are insufficiently realist but that they are insufficiently radical.

What they miss in calling for a democracy of attention is that our problem is not that democracy has not worked, but rather that it has and its results are less than good. The authors note that a just social system is impossible without people being just, but they do not see the problem of where in this society the training of people to be good and just might happen. I suspect they cannot press that question because they remain so determinedly committed to the American democratic "experiment." Like their social gospel forebears, they simply cannot envision the possibility that America is not an exceptional society.

Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in their account of religion in America. Bellah and his colleagues praise religion because they note that religious groups, unlike other groups in our society, are concerned not only with the common good of the nation but also with the common good of all human beings. So religion becomes good for America because it makes Americans concerned about other nations and people. "Religion" is thus understood and justified in functional terms. The idea that people might have convictions correlative to their worship of God that would create a deep tension between that worship and America is not considered.

There is much to admire about Bellah and his associates, not the least of which is their willingness to write together. Indeed, it should be emphasized that they exhibit in the very production of this book the kind of communitarian spirit they so desire for the rest of us. That is an extraordinary witness in itself.

Yet I find this book deeply dissatisfying. Many will read it as a sustained attack on our social and political institutions, but I fear it is far too conventional. Little of the analysis provided of American history, politics, or educational and religious institutions is new or interesting. To their credit, the authors do provide thick descriptions of perennial problems in American political culture, but even then they do little to help us get beyond the false alternatives of individualism and communitarianism. In an odd way they fail to see that that very posing of the problem is produced by the liberal political presuppositions they criticize.

They ignore entirely the more interesting question, raised again by recent events in Eastern Europe, concerning the very viability of the boundaries of modern nation-states. They quote the agrarian poet philosopher Wendell Berry approvingly, but they fail to follow through on Berry's radical challenge to the nation/state as we know it. Had they done so they would have written a much more interesting and compelling book.

Postmodern Christian Traditionalism?

THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL THEORY: BEYOND SECULAR REASON. By JOHN MILBANK. *Basil Blackwell. 443 pp. $64.95.*

***Reviewed by* Ian Markham**

JOHN MILBANK does not get a very good press in Britain. He is viewed as a young upstart who is breaking the accepted conventions of Christian ethics. His main crime is that he wants to develop the Christendom tradition that many regard as a dead end. The Christendom Group was a movement that played a part in British social thinking during the 1930s and 1940s. Its members argued that secularism was deeply destructive in its cultural effects and that it was necessary to develop a Christian analysis of society that would challenge secular assumptions. In North America such ideas ought to be acceptable—or at least not unfamiliar. Alasdair MacIntyre, among others, has in recent years made respectable this sort of approach to ethical questions. Milbank shares MacIntyre's approach; his rigorous ethical reflection is based on a careful historical analysis of modern culture.

It is indeed one of the unnoticed achievements of Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* that it rehabilitated a tradition of ethical reflection that had gone out of fashion. His work has stimulated a lively conversation and debate, with substantial contributions coming from scholars like Jeffrey Stout and Stanley Hauerwas. But prior to Milbank, there had been nothing of equal substance from Britain.

Milbank's project is ambitious. He wants to be nothing less than a postmodern Christian traditionalist. He is postmodern in that he rejects the realist claim that traditions are in the business of

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making coherent sense of the world and that certain traditions do this better than others. Instead he believes that we must accept that we are trapped within our culturally determined traditions, with no way of knowing which tradition best describes the world. This postmodern historicism dominates most of Milbank's discussion.

In Milbank's approach to ethics, there are only different narratives with different political implications. He employs his historicism to argue that secular liberal modernity is simply a "theological faith" resting on an "ontology of violence," by which he means "a reading of the world which assumes the priority of force and tells how this force is best managed and confined by counterforces." Modernity assumes that society is made up of isolated individuals needing to be controlled. But this assumption, Milbank insists, is a theological judgment about human nature that is neither more nor less "justified" than any other theological judgment. Secular modernity is not, as it supposes itself to be, an understanding of reality objectively superior to earlier understandings; it is rather a narrative highly damaging in its effects resting on assumptions no more legitimate or illegitimate than those of a Christian narrative.

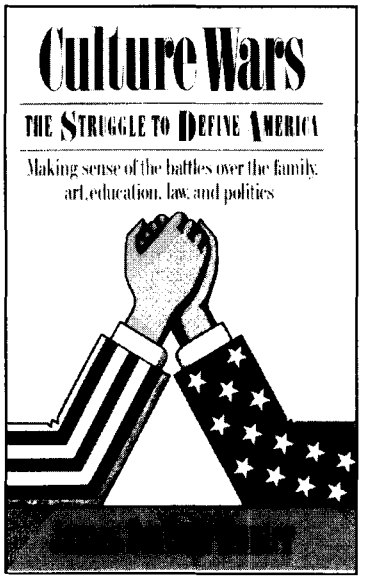
HAVING dealt with the underlying assumptions of modernity, Milbank moves on to the great post-Enlightenment worldview (or—as he prefers—meta-narrative) of Marxism. The Hegelian-Marxist tradition, in Milbank's view, rightly exposes the violent nature of capitalism, but it is itself still trapped in the assumptions of "secular reason." This one-sided critique by Marxists of capitalism needs to be criticized by Christian socialists, whose tradition can challenge the assumptions of modernity. Any theology that bases itself on Marxist analysis will be working with secular assumptions; thus liberation theology "has been simply another effort to reinterpret Christianity in terms of the dominant secular discourse of our day."

In the last section of the book, Milbank confronts the postmodernist abyss of nihilism. In a superb critique of Nietzsche, he illustrates that at root the most likely political expression of a nihilistic critique will be fascist. If there are only different ways of looking at the world, then the strongest will be the one to prevail. But while Milbank wants to reject nihilism, he does not want to opt for the critical realism of MacIntyre. Milbank finds MacIntyre's position untenable: "MacIntyre, of course, wants to argue against this stoic-liberal-nihilist tendency, which is secular reason. My case is rather that it is only mythos, and therefore cannot be refuted, but only outnarrated, if we persuade people—for reasons of 'literary taste'—that Christianity offers a much better story."

How does Milbank suppose that he can be genuinely postmodern and yet a traditional Christian? How can one be historicist without being nihilist? Milbank's proposal is ingenious. It is true, he says, that all we have is a range of different traditions, and decisions between traditions cannot be made on some "tradition-transcendent grounds." Yet it is possible that one of these traditions might in fact be the truth. This is what the Christian narrative claims to be: It is a meta-discourse that can and should embrace all human life and activity. So in a brilliant ironic move, Milbank turns out to be antirealist about everything except God.

BUT can this work? There is something quite odd in affirming the Christian narrative as a meta-discourse and yet with equal tenacity denying any legitimate rational engagement between traditions. Milbank believes that one is not persuaded by good reasons to move from one tradition to another, that one cannot have dialogue between

—Nowadays your position on Jesus matters less than your position on Rousseau.



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traditions in a quest for the truth, and that one cannot know that one's tradition describes reality in a "more complete" way than any of the alternatives. All one can do is "convert" (in a fideistic sense) and enact the narrative in one's life.

This sounds like the worst of all worlds. For Richard Rorty, one is simply inventing a way of looking at the world; for Alasdair MacIntyre, one is trying to describe the world; for Milbank, one describes the world, but in what appears to be simply a personal and arbitrary way. Milbank will not accept MacIntyre's idea of a tradition that "explains more," yet is quite happy with the notion of a tradition that "out-narrates."

But why is one not able to take the fact that the secular narrative is so destructive as a reason for rejecting it? Milbank's objection is that one is then appealing to a tradition-transcendent rationality. But perhaps not. The whole point of Aquinas' cosmological argument is that the intelligibility of the universe is evidence for the existence of God. One could argue that the critically realist instinct is evidence for the truth of the Christian narrative. This would mean that instead of sinking as Milbank does into a postmodern theological realism that is both fideistic and exclusive (in the sense that it excludes as "untrue" all other traditions), one can be taken up with a commitment to dialogue, which feeds on the insights within other traditions under the umbrella of rational inquiry that itself is both within and yet evidence for the truth of the Christian narrative.

The advantage of a critical realism would resolve some ambiguities in Milbank's approach to history. As noted, he proceeds in general on historicist assumptions. For example, when criticizing Wayne Meeks, he explains that one cannot get to a "pre-textual genesis." But sometimes he forgets. Thus, when he criticizes the liberal Protestant meta-narrative as it initially appeared in Weber, he concludes: "Hence Weber was simply wrong to discover in ancient Judaism the germs of a 'protestant' religion . . ."; and later, "there is no reason to suppose any identifiable Christianity before the emergence of strong ecclesial themes . . . "; and once again, "it is not true that before the Pope's assumption of imperial powers, the Church was an essentially 'spiritual' body of individuals." For Milbank, Weber was wrong and his ideas are simply not true. Milbank's language suggests strongly that the historical judgments of Weber are less appropriate than the historical judgments of Milbank. But what are the criteria by which he makes these judgments? One concludes that it must be some sort of objective history that can be described in better or worse ways. This will not do for a postmodern historicist.

Yet for all the questions and criticisms that arise about this dense and difficult book, it is at the same time quite brilliant. One wishes it were more accessible, but the work is undoubtedly a tour de force. As Milbank moves from Lancaster to Cambridge, we await his further work with great anticipation.

Death in the Netherlands

REGULATING DEATH: EUTHANASIA AND THE CASE OF THE NETHERLANDS. By CARLOS GOMEZ, M.D. Foreword by LEON R. KASS, M.D. *Free Press. 172 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by **Russell Hittinger**

AS CARLOS GOMEZ notes in this important book, the statute law of the Netherlands clearly prohibits euthanasia. Article 293 of the Netherlands Penal Code (enacted in 1886) stipulates: "He who robs another of life at his express and serious wish is punished with a prison sentence of at most twelve years or a fine. . . ." To date, there has been no political will by the Dutch to either eliminate or amend Article 293. Nevertheless, over the past two decades the Dutch judiciary, legislature, and the Royal Dutch Society for the Promotion of Medicine (KNMG) have reinterpreted Article 293 so as to either positively permit, overlook, or remove punishments from physician-assisted suicide.

No one has precise figures on how many patients are euthanized in the Netherlands. The Ministry of Justice claims that there are fewer than 200 cases per year; pro-euthanasia groups contend that the number reaches 20,000—which, if true, would mean that 16.5 percent of the mortality rate in the Netherlands is due to medical euthanasia. The lack of precise figures stems from the fact that physicians and other health-care workers do not report these killings as euthantic acts, but rather register the deaths as the result of cardiac or respiratory arrest. Carlos Gomez's research finds that in less than 2 percent of the cases is euthanasia brought to the attention of prosecutors, and these cases are almost never litigated. In the absence of precise statistics, the evidence on euthanasia in the Netherlands remains anecdotal, which means among other things that the practice cannot be accountable to public scrutiny.

Friends and foes of medical euthanasia in the Netherlands admit that its legal status is unclear. Court opinions since 1973 have created a patchwork of case law on what can count as an exception to Article 293. These judicial opinions have run the gamut from rather straightforward efforts to distinguish between murder and assisted-suicide for the purpose of criminal sentencing, to creating bureaucratic criteria for what can count as legally acceptable killing, to outright admitting a right to self-determination that

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includes the right to assisted suicide—and for the purpose of alleviating not merely pain but "potential disfigurement of personality."

And yet Article 293 stands as what lawyers call blackletter law. Recent efforts to frame a consistent body of statutory law have not been successful. Gomez speculates that the Dutch want to have it both ways: holding to blackletter law that prohibits homicide while at the same time allowing decentralized and officially deregulated decision-making by physicians when mercy or benevolence seems to call for euthanasia. In any event, prosecutors and health-care practitioners are not entirely certain whether the status of euthanasia is to be described as extra-legal, legal at the discretionary margins of the law, or in fact allowed for under a legally recognized right to privacy—somewhat along the lines of the American concept. As a prominent Dutch ethicist has described the situation, court opinions, governmental commission statements, and hospital protocols have evolved in a way that creates an interstitial "private space" for medical euthanasia.

GIVEN the murky legal standing of euthanasia, the medical establishment is left to police itself. Efforts by the KNMG to set in-house guidelines have not proved very successful. Its criteria have included: the necessity defense, in which both patient and physician find themselves under such duress that Article 293 must be overridden; the so-called *ultimum refugium*, or last resort; voluntariness on the patient's part (which would seem to undercut the first two criteria); and provisions that only physicians may decide and administer death and that such decisions should be made in the context of collegial consultation. There are no provisions regarding the means of bringing about death, nor about how the patient's demise is to be officially recorded. Although the KNMG insists that euthanasia must be professionally and ethically limited in order to prevent indiscriminate killing, its own guidelines have not ensured any effective way either to make or enforce the relevant distinctions.

Carlos Gomez, a medical resident at the University of Virginia Hospital, went to the Netherlands in order to investigate, describe, and analyze the actual practice of medical killing. In lieu of any well-formulated law or administrative policy on the matter, Gomez figured that prevailing practices furnish the best entry into the situation. While he has some interesting things to say about the philosophical and ethical facets of the issue, Gomez devotes himself primarily to description and analysis. His goal is to clarify the evolving Dutch

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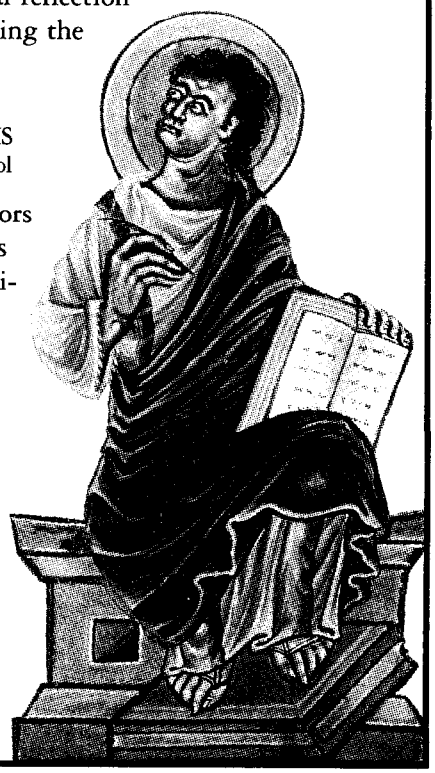

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experience so that we can determine whether or not this is a model that we should emulate in the United States.

The centerpiece of the book is a study of twenty-six cases of medical euthanasia reported by nine different health-care workers—mostly physicians—who have been involved. Although the Dutch are not very interested in distinguishing between active and passive euthanasia, it is important to note that all of these cases involve the direct taking of life through the administration of a lethal dose of drugs. Interestingly, in most of the cases, the patients elected to have the medical practitioner administer the drug rather than take it orally by their own hand.

Gomez does not disguise the fact that his data are not drawn from first-hand observations. He is also properly reticent about what can be inferred from these interviews. He argues, nonetheless, that the interviews should arouse our suspicion as to whether the Netherlands has any intelligent or effective grip on the problem of distinguishing between medical and non-medical reasons for physician-assisted killing.

EXAMPLES of that abound in his cases. We find, for instance, that of a 67-year-old divorced, childless alcoholic, who after only one round of chemotherapy for liver cancer chooses to forgo further treatment. After requesting death, the patient is euthanized with a fatal dose of pentobarital. The prosecutor is not notified, and the death is recorded as heart failure. In a similar case, a 28-year-old woman with leukemia, which had been in remission for one year, decides to stop treatment after a relapse. Despite the fact that a relapse is the norm in such cases, the physicians accede to her demand to be euthanized. In this case, the prosecutor is notified, but drops charges. A 72-year-old woman with lung cancer is diagnosed as clinically depressed. The physicians decide to go ahead with her request for a fatal injection even though an alternative antidepressant has not been tried. The prosecutor is not notified, and the cause of death is recorded as respiratory arrest. A 32-year-old AIDS patient announces his intention to die rather than receive any treatment. Over the objections of his homosexual lover, the physicians administer the euthantic in compliance with the patient's wishes. Here, the prosecutor is notified, but he refers the case back to the hospital administrator. A 62-year-old man, diagnosed as having lung cancer, announces his intention to be euthanized unless the physicians can guarantee that all pain will disappear. Unable to give such assurances, the physicians kill him at his request, and the death is registered as cardiac arrest. The prosecutor is not notified. A neonate with down's syndrome is discovered to have duodenal blockage. The mother confesses that caring for such a child is beyond her competence, and she refuses to give permission for surgery. The physicians then accede to her request to euthanize the child in order to alleviate the suffering caused by starvation.

What seems most disturbing about these and other of the cases reported by Gomez is that there are apparently as many acceptable reasons to kill patients as there are private reasons to commit suicide. That is to say, Gomez found little or no basis in these practices for distinguishing between the canons of medical diagnosis and the merely private desire to be killed. Moreover, physicians arrogated to themselves the authority to interpret nonmedical facts, not only facts that could be described in terms of a so-called quality of life, but also what are ordinarily the facts crucial to law—not the least of which is the context in which the patient gave his or her consent to be killed. Indeed, in some of these cases, consent was ascertained merely on the basis of a remark inscribed in the patient's chart. In other words, a patient who is heard to utter "I'd rather be dead" upon learning that he has inoperable brain cancer could have implicitly signed his own death warrant.

According to Gomez's research, there are relatively few cases that would satisfy either the necessity or the last-resort criteria. Indeed, in virtually all of the cases reported in the book, additional treatments and pain-protocols were readily available. Patients were killed simply on the grounds (themselves often inexpertly ascertained) that they so desired. Gomez suggests that some Dutch physicians pay little or no heed to when they cross the threshold that separates (i) professional advice and assurance about medical treatments, and (ii) explicit discussion of euthanasia as one option among others. Inasmuch as the latter is still (in Dutch law) illegal, the medical profession is caught in a terrible sort of problem. For the physician who recommends that euthanasia be considered as an option can easily substitute a nonmedical judgment regarding an illegal act for a medical judgment that concerns perfectly legal and therapeutically sound treatments. We can agree with Gomez that no medical professional worth his salt would (willingly) allow himself to be drawn into that situation.

The case of the neonate with Down's syndrome raises yet another disturbing problem. That was certainly not an instance of necessity. Nor would it qualify as a last resort—unless last resort includes killing someone in order to alleviate pain caused by a refusal to treat the patient in the first place. Nor, for obvious reasons, would it come under the principle of individual autonomy, since that principle requires rational consent. Nor, finally, does it seem to fall in a quality-of-life category. Rather, as reported to Gomez, the decision to kill the infant was made because the mother said she was not up to caring for a disabled child. As Gomez points out, the neonate case raises the specter of the medical killing of the vulnerable, the demented, the retarded, the severely

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handicapped, the indigent, and the elderly—anyone, basically, who is not sufficiently alert or verbal to claim a right against someone else's inconvenience.

IF GOMEZ'S data turn out to reflect general practice—which only further investigation can determine one way or the other—it will be fair to say that the practice of euthanasia in the Netherlands stands indicted at the bar of reason. On his limited evidence, even those distinctions and procedural safeguards routinely urged by ethicists on the "progressive" side of the euthanasia issue would appear not to be observed in Dutch practice. The data are, in any case, sufficiently distressing to warrant additional research. Gomez's information may be wrong or distorted, but the burden is on the pro-euthanasia side to challenge his work on grounds beyond an abstract refutation of his second-hand method. There can be no substitute for an extensive, first-hand examination of the practice of medical killing in the Netherlands. Even on the basis of the little we know, it is fair to suggest, as Gomez reasonably puts it, that "the Dutch experience might better serve as a cautionary tale than as a paradigm worthy of emulation." That medical killing could gain entry into our culture via the interstices of case law, statute, and vague professional guidelines does not strain the imagination. It is precisely the analogy between the Netherlands and our own culture that makes this book alarming reading.

The proponent of liberalized euthanasia laws might respond that, even conceding the accuracy of Gomez's data, the problem can be fixed. It might be argued, for instance, that the problem is due in part to the fact that the Dutch have not had the political courage to eliminate or amend Article 293 of the Penal Code. The inconsistencies, contradictions, and furtive practices now in place might bespeak a problem more in law than in any inherent moral difficulty in regulating and setting limits to euthanasia. It might also be argued that the apparent breakdown of reasonable procedures for medical decisions and reports regarding euthanasia can be fixed by competent administrative boards. The need for more careful bureaucratic regulation can be cheerfully conceded, and even urged, by the proponents of euthanasia without seriously calling into question the morality of such acts. Finally, to take a lesson from the pages of American constitutional history, it could be argued that the Dutch need to recognize more explicitly a right of privacy. As in the abortion issue, a right to die in consultation with one's physician would not elimi-

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nate moral controversy, but it would help to establish a rights-based criterion for most of the cases reported by Gomez.

Gomez does not develop philosophical answers to these questions. He does, however, raise solid and serious moral criticisms about prevailing practices: (i) the potential, if not probable, corruption of the medical profession; (ii) the untenable sacrifice of a public good to protect merely private preferences; and (iii) the failure to protect the vulnerable. On each score, Gomez clearly states the moral nature of the problem, and why it involves an issue that is properly public and political. And on all three grounds, he has a strong case. I am also convinced that this criticism can be sustained even if one believes that the administrative facets of the Dutch experiment can be fixed.

It is true that Gomez's moral criticism is only broadly sketched rather than relentlessly argued in *Regulating Death*. Yet Gomez only promised to describe and analyze the case of the Netherlands. Measuring the book against that goal, the author succeeds. Responsible ethicists and framers of public policy will not be able to brush aside this book.

BRIEFLY NOTED

THE ORGANIZATIONAL REVOLUTION: PRESBYTERIANS AND AMERICAN DENOMINATIONALISM. Edited by MILTON J. COALTER, JOHN M. MULDER, and LOUIS B. WEEKS. *Westminster/John Knox Press. 376 pp. $16.95.*

As more volumes in the "Presbyterian Presence" series become available, its value as a case study in the present crisis of mainline/oldline Protestant denominations is increasingly apparent. The present book looks at the organizational dimension of the Presbyterian (and mainline) "predicament" in twelve essays, dealing with denominational structures; financial changes; women's, men's, and special-interest groups; and in two provocative concluding essays, some speculative conclusions about where the changes have brought us. One major theme is that American denominational organizations have gradually been transformed along corporate bureaucratic lines, reflecting the values and managerial assumptions of American business. Another is an awareness of the overall decline of denominationalism, coupled with a growth of localism and congregational decision-making. Also informing many of the essays is a recognition of the organizational effects of the pluralism that has come to characterize mainline denominations. In this regard the analysis of Robert Wuthnow, who points to the cleavage between liberals and conservatives that cuts across all such denominations, seems to have influenced most of the writers and is frequently cited. The concluding essay by Craig Dykstra and James Hudnut-Beumler suggests (through metaphor) that the dysfunctional corporate bureaucratic mode of denominational organization has been replaced by a "regulatory agency" mode. No longer able to provide goods and services acceptable to their constituencies, the bureaucracies seek to regulate procedures, policies, and the expenditure of funds in church structures they no longer directly control.

—Richard G. Hutcheson, Jr.

TRANSFORMING PARISH MINISTRY: THE CHANGING ROLES OF CATHOLIC CLERGY, LAITY, AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS. By JAY P. DOLAN et al. *Crossroad. 366 pp. $24.95 cloth, $14.95 paper.*

A socio-historical account of parish ministry from 1930 to 1980 written from a distinctly "progressivist" angle. Keeping the bias in mind, the book provides a great deal of useful information begging for a more persuasive interpretation.

SEX IN THE PARISH. By KAREN LEBACQZ and RONALD G. BARTON. *Westminster/John Knox Press. 278 pp. $14.95 paper.*

This is a serious effort to establish limits on appropriate and inappropriate sexual expression between clergy and parishioners. It assumes the truth of conventional feminist and homosexualist critiques of society, and tends to be dismissive of traditional sexual ethics as "culturally conditioned." *Sex in the Parish* is an interesting inquiry into how to contain the damage after anything like an identifiably Christian sexual ethic has been abandoned.

THE AMERICAN SEARCH FOR PEACE: MORAL REASONING, RELIGIOUS HOPE, AND NATIONAL SECURITY. Edited by GEORGE WEIGEL and JOHN R. LANGAN. *Georgetown University Press. 281 pp. $30 cloth, $15 paper.*

The "correlation of forces," as the Marxists used to say, has dramatically transformed the international arena in the last few years, and some of these essays may not take that adequately into account. Others do, however, making this book a very useful guide to religio-moral thinking about the new world order or, as the case may be, the new old world order. In addition to the editors, contributors include James Childress, Bryan Hehir, James Turner Johnson, and David Hollenbach.

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Economics Today: A Christian Critique. By Donald A. Hay. *Eerdmans. 336 pp. $17.95 paper.*

An overview by a fellow of Jesus College, Oxford. Its almost complete indifference to religious and moral disputes about economics in this country will make it of limited interest to American readers.

Geno: The Life and Mission of Geno Baroni. By Lawrence M. O'Rourke. *Paulist Press. 314 pp. $11.95 paper.*

Geno Baroni, who died in 1984, was an Italian-American priest-politician famed for his commonsensical radicalism in devotion to the poor. In the Carter administration he was Assistant Secretary for Housing and Urban Development. He played an important part in the "ethnic renascence" of the 1970s and early decried the error of the Democratic party, his party, in alienating those who cherished traditional moral and social values. The author, Washington correspondent for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, has rendered his friend a great service in this moving memoir.

Piety, Purity, Plenty: Images of Protestantism in America. By Robert L. Ferm. *Fortress Press. $8.95 paper.*

A professor of religion at Middlebury College opines that fundamentalism is "inadequate" and that "peeling away the layers of the [doctrinal] onion has left liberal Christianity with nothing." While he allows that doctrinal debates about Christ and the Trinity are of only antiquarian interest, he comes out for what he calls a "redemptive process" in which good people do not give up on the goal of establishing the kingdom of God on earth. Mr. Ferm might give some thought to where he discarded those onion peels.

The Scarlet Lady: Confessions of a Successful Abortionist. By Carol Everett with Jack Shaw. *Wolgemuth & Hyatt. 266 pp. $14.99.*

The compelling and popularly written story of a woman who ran a large abortion clinic in Texas and was slowly forced by conscience into the prolife movement. It is another important entry in the genre of Dr. Bernard Nathanson's *Aborting America*. An underreported factor in the abortion debate is the number of people in the prolife cause who have had abortions or been abortionists.

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Richard John Neuhaus

The Public Square
A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

The Real John Dewey

This writer has sometimes puzzled friends and critics alike by expressing a firm, though qualified, admiration for John Dewey. John Dewey?! You mean that arch-secular humanist, that despiser of religious "supersitition," that progressivist despoiler of our once commonsensical public schools? Yes, that John Dewey. He got an awful lot of things quite wrong, but Dewey did understand, as few intellectuals today do understand, that the American democratic experiment is indeed an experiment. He knew that it is an experiment that cannot be sustained without a public philosophy, and that such a public philosophy must be grounded in moral truth. Those were some of the great things that John Dewey got right. Regrettably, the public philosophy he proposed was, in our judgment, wrong on its merits, and it was and is shared by few Americans. A philosphical foundation for democracy that is neither understood nor accepted by the people who constitute the democracy in question is of limited use in sustaining that democracy.

We have sometimes described the purpose of this journal and its related enterprises in terms of "advancing a religiously grounded public philosophy for the democratic experiment in freedom and virtue." John Dewey would have been at home with such a formulation, except the religion that he had in mind was his very uncommon "common faith" that he contrived as a replacement for the "traditional religion" that he thought hopelessly outdated. Much of what Dewey got right, however, is brilliantly and readably set forth by Robert B. Westbrook of the University of Rochester in a major new book, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Cornell). Westbrook laments the fact that relatively few thinkers today pay much attention to Dewey. Even more lamentable, many who are interested in Dewey have come to him through Richard Rorty, the philosopher turned literary critic who claims to be Dewey's apostle in our time.

As faithful readers know, this writer has his own problems with Richard Rorty (see "Joshing Mr. Rorty," December 1990). Robert Westbroook's concerns are closely related to those problems. He begins by noting, very delicately, that Rorty's appropriation of Dewey "is a controversial one." Rorty himself has on occasion admitted that his self-identification with Dewey should not be taken too literally. "Sometimes," Rorty says, "when we think we are rediscovering the mighty dead, we are just inventing imaginary playmates." Exactly, says Mr. Westbrook. He then goes on to detail some of the dramatic differences between Rorty and Dewey. "Rorty urges philosophers to abandon claims to knowledge and rest content with 'edifying,' 'therapeutic' criticism; Dewey, while also warning sternly of the 'conceit of knowledge,' worried as well that philosophy that was *merely* edifying would degenerate into little more than an expression of 'cloudy desire.' Rorty sees philosophy as playful; Dewey insisted it was, as an *intellectualized* wish, hard work. Rorty argues that there is no need for social theorists to consider such topics as 'the nature of selfhood, the motive of moral behavior, and the meaning of human life.' Dewey thought that as a social theorist he had to say something about such things. 'On the Deweyan view,' Rorty says, 'no such discipline as 'philosophical anthropology' is required as a preface to politics'; Dewey's view was quite otherwise. Rorty seeks to deconstruct philosophy; Dewey sought to reconstruct it. As Richard Bernstein has said, what Rorty slights or dismisses as 'trivial' or 'mistaken' in Dewey's thought is his primary concern with 'the role that philosophy might play *after* one had been liberated from the obsessions and tyrannies of the 'problems of philosophy.' Perhaps the best way to sum up briefly the differences separating Dewey and Rorty as philosophers is to say that, while both ruthlessly undercut the quest for certainty, Dewey believed effective cultural criticism still might profit from the general 'ground-maps' that philosophers could provide. Finding such maps useless and unnecessary, Rorty argues for cultural criticism that flies entirely

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by the seat of its pants."

Although Westbrook doesn't put it quite this way, he suggests that Rorty, very unlike Dewey, is something of a poseur, a morally as well as intellectually frivolous figure. "Pressed by critics to make clearer his moral and political commitments," writes Westbrook, "Rorty has said enough of late to suggest that his social hope as well as his view of the responsibilities of philosophy differ significantly from Dewey's. Refusing to accept the ethical postulate conjoining self-realization and the social good which was at the heart of Dewey's ethics throughout his career, Rorty has argued for a 'liberal utopia' in which there prevails a rigid division between a rich, autonomous private sphere that will enable elite 'ironists' like himself to create freely the self they wish—even if that bares a cruel, antidemocratic self—and a lean, egalitiarian, 'democratic' public life confined to the task of preventing cruelty (including that of elite ironists). For Dewey, of course, democracy was a 'way of life' not merely a way of public life—an ideal that 'must affect all modes of human association'—and he would not have accepted Rorty's contention that 'there is no way to bring self-creation together with justice at the level of theory' for that would have required him to give up a principal article of democratic faith. Rorty contends that the belief that 'the springs of private fulfillment and of human solidarity are the same' is a bothersome Platonic or Christian hangover. If so, Dewey suffered from it."

John Dewey deserves to be rediscovered, and *John Dewey and American Democracy* should help that to happen. Dewey had the right project, no matter how flawed his prosecution of it. Like other public philosophers such as Walter Lippmann, John Courtney Murray, and Reinhold Niebuhr, he understood that the self-evident truths on which this experiment is premised are not self-evident to most people; they have to be rediscovered and rearticulated in every generation. Dewey's great mistake was to think that he could break those truths away from their necessary and continuing dependence upon biblical religion. He lived in a time when the best and the brightest were miseducated to believe that traditional religion was simply beyond the pale of plausibility for the truly enlightened. The cultural hegemony of that rationalist dogma is no longer very secure. Indeed it is collapsing all around us. Perhaps some young scholar reading *John Dewey and American Democracy* will aspire to become a new John Dewey, only this time advancing a public philosophy that is in critical conversation with a common faith that is enduringly common.

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AS INTEREST GROUP

In 1976 the Administrative Board of the U.S. Catholic Conference (USCC) issued a 3,400-word voter guide called "Political Responsibility." They've been doing it every few years since then. The 1992 edition, "Political Responsibility: Revitalizing American Democracy," is 8,700 words. In tone and substance the guide hasn't changed all that much over the years. The current statement is more explicit in pushing affirmative action in order to, it says, overcome the results of racism in the past.

The political positions endorsed by the USCC are clustered in issues under letters "A" to "Q." (Foreign policy is bunched together under "P.") The politically correct who watch their Ps and Qs are warned at the end of Q: "This is not an exclusive listing of the issues that concern us. . . . Thus, we are advocates on many other social justice concerns such as welfare reform, the civil and political rights of the elderly and persons with disabling conditions, the reform of our criminal justice system, and the protection of the land and the environment." That comes after a seemingly interminable list of things that concern the USCC, just in case anything was left out. A leftward activist group in Washington, D.C., has the name now, but it seems increasingly appropriate that the USCC offices should be designated The Center of Concern.

There are trenchant statements on protecting the unborn and on the evil of active euthanasia, together with a call for equitable tax support for school choice and support for increased immigration. But the bishops propose an awfully long list of things on which they want the Catholic faithful, and indeed the entire citizenry, to take them seriously. (A USCC staffer, reminded that the bishops had declared abortion to be the Number One issue for the Catholic Church, responds, "True enough, but you must remember we have at least seven or eight Number One issues.") Apart from the issues mentioned, the positions and directions endorsed by "Political Responsiblity" are pretty much those of the *New York Times* editorial page. Nor is the form and substance of argument that much different.

The document bears all the marks of apparatchiks grinding out a party line according to bureaucratic schedule. The document issues from a staff-driven and schedule-driven process. It is not done because there is an outcry from the faithful wanting political guidance from the bishops on a hundred and one issues. It is done because it was done before. Busy bishops in brief assembly are presented with one more item for approval on a crowded agenda. Those who had time to read it in advance are reluctant to take up the time of the meeting in debating this issue or that, never mind raising the question of whether

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the Church or the nation really needs a Political Platform of the Catholic Church. Such statements are made, in largest part, because there is a structure for making them. And because other churches and interest groups in Washington, all of whom have a position on almost everything, expect the Catholic Church to have a position on agricultural appropriations, trade policy with Japan, or whatever is agitating some Congressional subcommittee tomorrow morning. Inside the beltway, not to have a position is not to be. How refreshing it would be were the Catholic Church, or any church, to defy the imperiousness of that political ontology. But, alas, it seems that is not to be.

Efforts Well Understood

It is likely that considerably fewer people will read "Political Responsibility" than will read this commentary on it. So maybe we should just ignore it. But that would be a mistake. For numerous lobbyists and activists in Washington and state capitals, it is an imprimatur for the pursuit of their political penchants. To the satisfaction or irritation of politicians and journalists, it reflects "the Catholic position" on a host of disputed questions. The bishops protest that the Church is not merely an interest group, but the protest will be lost on anyone paying attention to this political platform. The bishops insist that they are not taking partisan positions. Their concern is "revitalizing American democracy." "Ironically," they write, "when people in other parts of the world are embracing democratic values and struggling to participate in public life, many Americans seem increasingly disinterested or disenchanted with politics." Perhaps one reason some people are uninterested or disenchanted is that they are weary of political factionalism dressed up in religious garb as a disinterested search for the common good.

"What we seek," the bishops say, "is not a religious interest group, but a community of conscience within the larger society, testing public life on these central [moral] values. Our starting point and objectives are neither partisan nor ideological, but are focused on the fundamental dignity of the human person, which cuts across the political categories of our day." It was, as we recall, George McGovern who first had the cheek to dub his faction "the constituency of conscience." The bishops say they must speak out to lift up "the human and moral dimensions" of public policy—dimensions with which others are presumably less concerned. Such unseemly boasting will not be welcomed by conscientious Christians and Jews who do not have the luxury of pontificating from the sidelines. As for cutting across political categories, the positions favored by the bishops—with the very important exceptions noted above—run the gamut from Mario Cuomo to the groupies on the left of the senior senator from Massachusetts.

"Unfortunately," the bishops acknowledge, "our efforts in this area are sometimes misunderstood. The church's participation in public affairs is not a threat to the political process or to genuine pluralism, but an affirmation of their importance." But most of those who "misunderstand" what the bishops are doing with this kind of political platform are not worried about the threat that it poses to the political process. They are worried about the threat that it poses to the integrity of the Church; they are worried about the corruption of the teaching office of the bishop; they are worried about Catholicism following mainline/oldline Protestantism into the swamps of politicized religion. Those who criticize the politicized institutional habits represented by "Political Responsibility" understand all too well what is happening.

The remedy for such statements is not to make them more "balanced," never mind more "conservative." The remedy, for the most part, is not to make them at all. *When it is not necessary for the Church to speak, it is necessary for the Church not to speak.* "Political Responsibility" is issued in the name of the bishops, but the voice is that of partisan players in the political games that keep Washington in thrall to its overweening delusions of self-importance. With the exceptions noted, the statement proposes no warrant or necessity for the bishops to speak apart from their putatively superior moral concern and wisdom. With the exceptions noted, all that they say is being said loudly and incessantly by numerous other groups. "Political Responsibility" reads like a banal, imitative, and dismally dull political broadside from yet another liberal interest group. The Catholic Church, indeed any church, should aspire to doing better than that, to *being* more than that.

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THE SOURCES OF TOLERANCE

James Davison Hunter's *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (Basic Books) is receiving a good deal of deserved attention. Hunter, an important participant in the program of the Institute on Religion and Public Life, elaborates in careful sociological fashion some of the foundational ideas that brought this journal into being. The most important of those ideas is that politics is in largest part a function of culture, and at the heart of culture is religion (whether it is called religion or not). Thus, as we have said so often, American public life is best understood in terms of a *Kulturkampf*, a battle over

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the ideas, moralities, stories, and symbols by which we will order our life together. The great merit of Hunter's work is that he has taken those ideas and fleshed them out with sociological theory and very useful data.

An extended review of *Culture Wars* will appear in a forthcoming issue. Our purpose here is to comment on one and, we expect, one fairly typical reaction to the *Kulturkampf* argument. It is by Alan Wolfe of New York's New School, writing in *The New Republic* (November 11, 1991). Wolfe observes that Americans are peculiar in the way that they invest their public energies in cultural rather than properly political issues. "It is not because Americans are politically sophisticated that they constantly frustrate those who would understand them," he writes, "but because they are politically innocent. Unable to abolish war, they have abolished politics; the state has not withered away, but the amount of attention paid to its affairs has withered badly." In what Hunter describes as a war between cosmologies—with secular modernists on the one side and orthodox believers on the other—Wolfe is beyond doubt on the modernist side. He admires the way that Hunter "remains neutral" in his analysis of the war, but he finally thinks such neutrality impossible.

Wolfe writes: "Nowhere is the difference between these worldviews clearer than in the fundamentalist assumption, cited numerous times throughout Hunter's book, that we are a Christian nation. At the risk of seeming intolerant of those who hold this position, we are not. There are Jews, Muslims, and any number of other non-Christians who live here and claim the rights of citizens. Fundamentalist language excludes them; liberal modernist language includes them. This is the reason, finally, that Hunter's evenhandedness fails: only one side in this war can live with the other. And the other side cannot reciprocate the respect."

The liberal modernist, says Wolfe, is willing to grant the "fundamentalist" the right to dissent, just so long as religion doesn't get in the way of the liberal ordering of society. At the heart of that order is the axiom of "faith in private and toleration in public"—i.e., the naked public square. Wolfe, and so many of like mind, just don't get it. Their notion of compromise is, "Let's compromise, we'll do it our way." Their notion of tolerance is, "We'll tolerate you so long as you don't trouble us with your different ideas." Some compromise. Some tolerance.

The simplistic worldview espoused by Wolfe is apparently impervious to the fact that even his liberal tolerance cannot stand on its own feet. He repeatedly adverts to democratic "process" and "procedure" as though the style of public discourse he favors is self-evidently right and therefore requires no justification. He does not offer an argument, he simply states a prejudice. The prejudice is most specifically against religion in public. "In a nation composed of people with diverse religious beliefs, no single religion can provide the moral framework for a public vocabulary," he writes. If a "single religion" can mean the Judeo-Christian tradition broadly construed, the assertion is obviously false. That tradition does provide the public vocabulary. Historically and at present, it also provides the way of including other vocabularies, such as that of ancient Athens and even of the secular liberalism that Wolfe favors.

In a magazine as sophisticated as *The New Republic* sometimes is, it is remarkable to find the tired complaint about this not being "a Christian nation." Of course this is not a Christian nation in the way that the Puritans intended the Bay Colony to be a Christian commonwealth. Our public life is manifestly not characterized by Christian virtues. But demographically and culturally it is equally obvious that this is a Christian nation. More than 90 percent of the American people claim to be Christians. Unless Mr. Wolfe is prepared to impose a theological or moral test for "true Christianity," it seems rather willful of him to deny that these people are Christians.

Would the Wolfes of our secularized elites deny any other generalization about this society that was borne out in the case of 90 percent or more of the population? How about the assertion that America is an English-speaking nation? It seems very doubtful that Mr. Wolfe would respond to that assertion by writing, "At the risk of seeming intolerant to those who hold this position, we are not. There are Spanish-speakers, and Chinese-speakers, and the speakers of any number of other languages who live here and claim the rights of citizens." America is Christian in the way that it is English-speaking. Relatively few speak the language very well, there is little agreement on how it should be spoken, some speak it hardly at all, but they all live here and claim the rights of citizens.

What James Hunter obviously has not gotten Alan Wolfe to understand is that the overwhelming majority of Americans derive their moral vocabulary and moral judgments, directly or indirectly, from religion. Whether we like that or not, it is the social fact. And the religion in question is overwhelmingly Christian of a sort that is comfortable in affirming a Judeo-Christian tradition. In private and in public, most Americans speak Christian—although when speaking in public many of them think it is their Christian duty (or a constitutional requirement) that they pretend that they are not speaking Christian. The secular dogma, propounded by Wolfe and many others, that religion must be contained entirely in the private sphere only encourages the pretense. The result, ironically, is that many Americans are discouraged from making in public the religiously grounded moral arguments for tolerating liberal

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secularists such as Alan Wolfe.

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EVANGELICALS ONWARD AND UPWARD

It has long been recognized that church membership statistics are notoriously unreliable, not least because different churches define membership in dramatically different ways. For instance, a Lutheran parish that counts as members all who have been baptized may have 600 members but only 250 at Sunday worship. Some large evangelical "megachurches," on the other hand, have done away with membership rolls altogether. Other evangelical churches may have several thousand at Sunday services but count only 300 members. That is because they have more exacting criteria of religious experience and commitment for membership.

Evangelicals, says Randall Balmer of Columbia University, have always been a larger percentage of the population than the usual statistics suggest. "Indeed," says Balmer, "the chances are good that, due to widespread popular disillusionment with liberal Protestantism, someone whose name appears as a member of a mainline denomination actually shows up for worship at an evangelical church." Balmer concludes: "Despite published statistics, there can be little doubt that now in the final decade of the twentieth century, the real energy of American Protestantism lies, for better or worse, with the evangelicals. For them, membership statistics tell us very little about their influence within the larger culture."

That observation may find support in a recent nationwide poll that asked 1,060 adults about their impressions of various denominations. Twenty-nine percent had a "very favorable" impression of the Baptist, 23 percent of the Roman Catholic, 18 percent of the Methodist, 12 percent of the Lutheran and Presbyterian, and 6 percent of the Mormon. Why no church gets more than a 29 percent "very favorable" rating is something that the pollsters do not attempt to explain.

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BEHAVIOR-BORNE DISEASE

There has been much debate over mandatory AIDS testing of medical workers. Columnist Charles Krauthammer thinks mandatory testing is a very bad idea. It would, he says, be fiscally reckless and impracticable. HIV is spread by people who already have HIV, and finally the only answer is an ethical one of "reveal or refrain." Either such people reveal their condition or refrain from the behavior that infects others. Krauthammer writes:

"In the public mind, the allocation of blame for AIDS has seen three stages. When the cause of AIDS first became known, AIDS patients were seen as victims of their own appetites. Then, with Ryan White, the young hemophiliac, they began to be seen as victims of fate. Now, AIDS activists are trying to portray AIDS patients as the victims of society: of an indifferent majority, of public silence, of government inaction, of drug company avarice, of Catholic homophobia.

"Some epidemics can be laid at the feet of government and some cannot. Cholera is a government-controllable and, in some ways, government-induced epidemic. If you don't treat the sewage, people will die. But that model does not apply to a disease that is not waterborne, or airborne but behavior-borne. In a free society, government can do little to influence the spread of a behavioral epidemic, and AIDS is the quintessential behavioral epidemic.

"The main role of government is to protect the civil rights of AIDS sufferers and to try to find a cure. (The federal government spends a staggering $3.7 billion a year on AIDS, $1.2 billion of it on research.) The rest depends on the private decision of individual citizens and, in particular, of the only ones in a position to spread AIDS: HIV carriers."

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RESPONDING TO THE "SECTS"

We have commented from time to time on the growing rivalry between Catholicism and evangelical/fundamentalist Protestantism, especially in Latin America. And we have worried that Catholic leaders have sometimes, in their polemic against "the sects," run the risk of compromising the Church's ecumenical understanding of the ways in which all Christians are, however imperfectly, already one in Christ and His Church. Speaking to this set of problems in its North American context (which is in large part an immigrant extension of the Latin American experience), Bishop Roberto O. Gonzalez of Boston, writing in *America* (October 19, 1991), has some important counsel for Catholics: "To speak of the new evangelization and of catechesis for

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Hispanics in this country, one must address the topic of the sects. I think that it should be said a thousand times that part of the success of the sects is their evangelical foundation, their unabashed rootedness in the Gospel—that they seem to present Christ in all His power as the foundation of new life, of conversion, of forgiveness of sins. Their preaching seems to be based solely upon the person and power of Christ. Thus, when speaking of a catechesis for a new evangelization, this catechesis should include a presentation of the gospel with these same characteristics, teaching how everything in Catholic life is related to its foundation, the person and power of Christ. . . . From the point of view of religious phenomena, sects will always be with us. We thus have to be careful lest an anti-sect mentality rule our response to them. For the sects can remind us of the need to be more faithful to our religious identity and mission. In this sense, the sects challenge us to be more serenely faithful to our mission of preaching the Gospel, of evangelizing, of catechizing. The more we are faithful to our mission, the fewer the people who will defect and the fewer the inroads the sects can make. Sects present an opportunity for us to be stronger in our faith, more Catholic, more evangelical, more convinced—which we ought to be anyway. The sects, in this sense, have a providential dimension. We cannot appear, therefore, to be competing with the sects, because then we become another sect. We succumb to an intra-sect battle. The church is not a sect. Yet the church is called by the Lord to be more church."

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ We came across this nice twist. TV journalist Linda Ellerbee contends on the op-ed page of the *Times* that women should recognize that there is a time and a season for everything. For instance, in the conflict between career and rearing children, choices must be made. Children are more important, she says, mainly because mothers are more important to children than to corporations. "If she has any doubts about devoting less time to her job and more time to being a mother right now, she should remember that while corporations don't always keep score, children do," writes Ellerbee. A couple of years ago, Ellerbee went to a conference of the American Association of University Women. Looking over the program, she noticed a workshop called "Having It All: How you can juggle career, children, love life, and leisure activities and keep your sanity." She protested to the president of the association that the promise of the workshop was a deception. No way can a woman do all that and keep her sanity. The president said they had cancelled the workshop. "Oh, really," said Ellerbee, "Why did you do that?" "Well," said the president, "we just couldn't fit it in." It seems even the American Association of University Women can't have it all.

■ ". . . pray for us sinners now and in the hour of our death." Peter Berger says all religion is mankind's waving of its banners of defiance in the face of death. Ernest Becker writes about the denial of death as the motor force of human ambition. Books beyond number have been written about preparing for "a good death" by the right ordering of the soul in dependence upon the mercy of God. Forget about all that. HarperCollins has just brought out *Easing the Passage: A Guide for Prearranging and Ensuring a Pain-Free and Tranquil Death via a Living Will, Personal Medical Mandate, and Other Medical, Legal, and Ethical Resources.* There we have it. A guaranteed tranquil, if not good, death. The ultimate extension of the pleasure principle to the conquest of what St. Paul—what did he know about such things?—called the last enemy. Had Herbert Marcuse not so spoiled the term, this might be dubbed the final triumph of "one-dimensional man."

■ Robert Bernard Martin makes much of the poet's homosexuality in his new biography *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life* (HarperCollins). Had he not been working so hard at repressing his sexual yearnings, says Martin, he might have been a much greater poet. Reviewing the book for the *The Spectator,* Charles Moore thinks that Martin misses the point. "[Hopkins] felt the dangers of mortal beauty, but he was able, in his art and his religion, to establish its right relation with 'God's better beauty, grace.' Even his last, great, miserable poems 'The Terrible Sonnets' do not defy orthodoxy; they express Hopkins' failure to reach the joy which he knows is in God. As a Jesuit, Hopkins had often to undergo what was called 'the discipline of the eyes,' forbidden to look at anything for a space. This must have been a worse torture for him than for anyone else, but it was also a necessary one. He could not have seen as deeply or as clearly if he had not learnt to deny what he wanted in order to gain something he wanted even more."

■ In 1965 there were 479,000 divorces in the U.S. In 1985 there were 1,190,000. In 1969 there were eight states with no-fault divorce provisions. Fifty states had such provisions in 1987. The growing divorce rate is but one reason why many people are reconsidering the wisdom of the "no-fault revolution" of the 1970s. Law professor Lynn Wardle of Brigham Young University joins those who point out that no-fault has had devastating consequences for women and children who are the frequent victims of "quickie" divorces. He writes in the University's

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law review, "The time has come to consider reforming the first generation of no-fault divorce laws. This does not mean that we should 'turn the clock back' and reenact 1950s-era divorce laws. But we should be unafraid to ask hard questions about the laws we have inherited. It is time to adopt a new generation of divorce law reforms." It is a persuasive argument. At the same time, however, we are pondering the observation that the growing influence of conservatism means that there is no going back to the time when you couldn't turn back the clock.

■ Those crazy right-wingers are prone to the most bizarre hyperbole. Consider this evaluation of the influence of the far left ("the party of change") in American Catholicism: "The party of change seems to embrace just about every active minister in the Church, with the exception of a large number of bishops and some conservative younger clergy. It dominates the fields of liturgy, religious education, justice and peace offices, campus ministry, Catholic higher education, much popular spirituality, and the discipline of theology as a whole." The speaker is not some fevered traditionalist but Father Richard McBrien, former Chairman of Theology at Notre Dame, in a keynote address to a "Future of the Church" conference in Washington, D.C. He also called for stripping the papacy of its powers by "decentralizing" the Church. In his vision, local churches would elect their own bishops and "send a letter to Rome just to let them know, as a courtesy before they announce it." McBrien acknowledged that some people "find it very difficult to see how someone like me and others who criticize the authority of the Church are at the same time absolutely loyal to the Church." Among the enemies of change, whom he compared to the Stalinist coup leaders who tried to oust Gorbachev, McBrien puts at the top of the list Pope John Paul II and his doctrinal aide Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. At a press conference he hinted that Ratzinger might have a Nazi past. "Keep in mind," he said, "Cardinal Ratzinger was a teenager during the Third Reich. We don't know what he was doing. Was he in the Hitler Youth? Some suggest he was." This may not be a new low in leftist smear tactics, but it is surely a candidate for that distinction.

■ We see from their bulletin that the folks at the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs are taking on some heavy subjects. Louis Henkin, a world order expert, gave a lecture on "Who's Ethics." We don't know whose mistake that was. Maybe the bulletin's editor. A forthcoming topic listed is "Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society* : 50 Years Later (1932-1992)." Perhaps those who flunk arithmetic go into ethics.

■ Nobody would dispute the observation that Carl Braaten is among the most respected theologians on the American scene. (See his "Protestants and Natural Law" elsewhere in this issue.) Recently he surprised almost everyone by announcing that, after many years of teaching there, he is leaving the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago to set up an independent institute for theology in Northfield, Minnesota. His friend Robert Jenson of St. Olaf College in Northfield reflects on why Braaten is leaving LSTC. What Jenson says about Lutheran seminaries has, we are sure, application far beyond the boundaries of Lutheranism. Jenson writes: "Long ago, the church's demand for various sorts of 'practical' and therapeutic 'experiences' in the seminary curriculum reduced their space for theology below the viable quantity. Biblical, historical, and systematic theology are hard disciplines, to which only the very most able and well-prepared can catch on quickly. For decades, a seminary teacher of serious theology has had to look out at his/her classses in the certain knowledge that with most of the students the labor was in vain. With those few gifted ones, teaching theology was a joy. But it was a joy dampened by guilt and panic over the innocents being graduated and the parishes they would serve.

"A few years ago the situation futher deteriorated as the recruitment of students changed. Seminary students now for the most part arrive with no appropriate higher education whatsoever. More disastrously yet, a decisive number seem somehow to self-select from the least catechized segments of our in-any-case secularized churches. This of course changed the curricular situation from calamitous to hopeless. And such students are defenseless over against the next-to-be-named set of evils.

"In the seminaries of the ELCA there is now a theological censorship of a stringency previously unknown in Lutheranism outside the Missouri Synod. The new reactionaries of course enforce a different selection of nineteenth-century sectarianism than did those of Missouri; alas, it is one even less compatible with theological enterprise or formation. Its chief axioms are perhaps: (1) biblical and historical study is for the purpose of liberating from the language and opinions of the Bible and the tradition; (2) 'God' is a complex of metaphors, projected from our religious needs and social valuations; (3) the church is a volunteer society of the religiously like-minded, which we continuously re-institute as our religious minds change; and (4) Western civilization is no damned good, and neither can Christianity be insofar as it is responsible for Western civilization. Probably a majority of professors dissent from this position, but the pietism and/or existentialism of most provides no stable basis of resistance, and the remaining margin is just that.

"And finally there is the quota system of faculty appointments—and don't let anyone tell you there isn't one. Faculty who worry about congregations out there fight again and again to appoint the best available scholars and teachers—and maybe even an

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unabashed Christian or two. But how many of these battles can one sustain in an ecclesial culture which regards such standards as wicked?"

■ In his homily at a recent service of ordination John Cardinal O'Connor of New York quoted from an unpublished manuscript of the late Hans Urs Von Balthasar. That distinguished theologian is discussing the need to make room for the Holy Spirit if the Church is to be renewed. He wrote: "Too frequently we have been tempted to make for ourselves a postconciliar ideology of the Church—as a democratic, charismatic people of God, with certain offices whose meaning is fought over—and we expect the Spirit to be channeled through the pipes of this ideology. He will not do so; that much we must admit today, even though reluctantly. . . .

"The pipes freeze; there is a whirl of new official positions which unceasingly spew forth designs, plans, synodal papers, and the like, far too many even to read much less be able to put into practice. The new national [institution] is one which, like Moloch, not only absorbs in itself and incinerates the best spiritual energies of the land, but furthermore paralyzes what really matters, the genuine personal decisions of individuals. . . .

"And so we must try to discover, as with a divining rod, where in the Church (and in the world), an underground spring of the Spirit bubbles, which possesses a sense for the futile, for the readiness for anything, for prodigality. We must try to discover persons who do not unfold their lives according to their own plans, but who are prepared to allow themselves to be cast in the Spirit, and through the Spirit, wherever, into whatever, the Spirit needs."

■ *Izvestia* asked Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Republic, why so many political leaders seemed to be "turning to God." Yeltsin replied: "I will speak for myself. First of all, I am baptized. My name and date of birth, as was the rule, are written in the baptismal registry. My grandparents were believers, as were my father and mother, until we left the country for the city. Later, in the course of a disproportionately ideological formation at school and in university, I constantly heard, read, and—why hide it—felt and shared the most insulting opinions concerning the Church and religion. This education was gravely wrong and seriously unjust, as was the classification of persons into believers and non-believers, a distinction which today is somewhat blurred. Having said this, I have the greatest respect for the Orthodox Church, for its history, for its contribution to Russian spiritual life, for its moral teachings, its tradition of mercy and charity. Today, the Church is moving ahead in these areas, and our duty is, in turn, to reestablish the rights of the Church. It is not rare for us to meet the Patriarch and other clergymen. When I am in a Church I take a candle. A religious service lasting four hours bores neither me nor my wife. And often, when I leave a church, I feel that something new, something luminous, has come into me. And yet, I cannot make the sign of the cross in public. Something keeps me from doing so. To tell the truth, there is no room for half-way belief. Generally speaking, the process is an ongoing task for the soul and which is no easier, in its way, than putting totalitarianism into question." The connection with totalitarianism is insightful. Faith is a matter of total commitment, or at least of willing a total commitment. Whether such totality of devotion results in spiritual life or death depends entirely upon the object of devotion. The spiritual life as a "task for the soul" says it very nicely.

■ The Institute on Religion and Public Life cooperated in holding a conference in Washington, D.C., on the centennial of *Rerum Novarum* a while back. Among the many speakers was Max Stackhouse of Andover-Newton and a contributor to this journal. He addressed the social teachings of mainline/oldline Protestantism or, as he prefers, "ecumenical Christianity." He thinks there are changes in the offing as we approach the twenty-first century. "It is clear that we will face a form of Protestantism differing from the one a hundred years ago. It is a less confident Protestantism, only now beginning to get its own house in order once more. The signs are no bigger than that of a cloud the size of a man's hand, but some of the most vocal Sandinista Christians are quietly moving (or being moved) to other positions. It has not been entirely lost on key Protestant leaders that the Catholics are winning the arguments, the Evangelicals are winning the people, and, besides that, the Republicans are winning the elections. Something has to change."

■ Joe Klein of *New York* magazine isn't buying the portrait that Charles V. Hamilton draws of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. (*Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.: The Political Biography of an American Dilemma*). Contra Hamilton, Klein says Powell did not contribute to racial progress but set it back by entrenching corruption and "the badass style" among those who claim to be black leaders. The replacement of the search for equality with strident demands for quotas and endless entitlements took the civil rights cause off track, says Klein. Masters of outlandishness such as Al Sharpton and Leonard Jeffries (the City University of New York professor who preaches that whites are inferior because they don't have the right stuff in their skin) are, according to Klein, the true heirs of Adam Clayton Powell. Klein concludes: "The empowerment, and the celebration, of these outrageous sorts has enabled whites to get off the hook too easily. If Sharpton, Jeffries, and anomic children with Uzis define the new popular image of blackness on the evening news, it will be easier to ignore the vast majority of black people who work hard, who dread crime, who

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struggle to build a better life for their kids. In the end, the legacy of Adam Clayton Powell isn't progress or pride. It's showtime."

■ Speaking at Trinity Church, Wall Street, former President Jimmy Carter got a big hand when he criticized the United Nations for condoning war in the Gulf "without totally exploring a peaceful resolution to the conflict." Like, for example, Saddam Hussein might have been willing to agree to be *very careful* in using the nuclear weapons that, it is now generally acknowledged, were within months of being ready for deployment.

■ Peter Singer, the Australian philosopher who champions "rights" for animals and infanticide, euthanasia, and population control for human beings, writes at length in *The New York Review of Books* about those awful German universities that have, under pressure, been "disinviting" him from conferences. It seems that many German professors and students detect a disturbing similarity between Singer's arguments and their unhappy political experience of the not-so-distant past. Singer complains: "Germans . . . both in academic life and in the press have shown themselves sadly lacking in the commitment exemplified by the celebrated utterance attributed to Voltaire: 'I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.' No one has, as yet, been asked to risk death in order to defend my right to discuss euthanasia in Germany, but it is important that many more should be prepared to risk a little hostility from the minority that is trying to silence a debate on central ethical questions." The Germans, it seems, will defend free speech to the death—meaning up to but not beyond the point where a speaker advocates, as Singer does, death for those who evidence a deficient "quality of life." It was not very long ago that liberals would have applauded such Germans for having "learned the lesson" of their horrific history. But then, Peter Singer is no liberal.

■ In January of 1975 a group of ecumenical theologians meeting at Hartford Seminary, Connecticut, issued "The Hartford Appeal," a call for churchly renewal. Recently the Lilly Endowment convened another meeting at the same site, this time bringing together former top executives from the oldline Protestant churches that have generally experienced in the intervening years whatever is the opposite of renewal. The focus was on the churches and public life, and the question posed was, "What have you learned?" Arie Brouwer, former head of the National Council of Churches (NCC), has learned that oldline churches "continue to act as if they are established institutions," when in fact they have been largely sidelined. Claire Randall, who headed the NCC before Brouwer, counseled that leaders should "be patient and keep trying." William P. Thompson of the former United Presbyterian Church and Doris Anne Younger, who once directed Church Women United, "stressed the need to develop creative ways of communicating." Bishop James K. Mathews of the United Methodists opined that the church must "take the real issues of our time with the utmost seriousness" and act on them. To judge by this RNS report, the Lilly Endowment project succeeded in learning that, except for Arie Brouwer, these leaders have learned little or nothing. Perhaps they might take another look at that Hartford meeting of 1975.

■ The simultaneously pensive, boyishly curious, and ever so sensitively concerned Bill Moyers is public television's candidate for America's Number One Public Philosopher. A fawning interview in the *Washington Post Magazine* concludes with this reflection: "The single greatest loss in my time has been the idea that we are moral agents. Religion helped a great deal here. Religion taught that we are accountable for our own actions. Tribute is still paid to it today, but all that we have been talking about indicates that nobody really expects it anymore. One thing you can say about Lyndon Johnson is that he finally paid for his excesses. I don't think you can say that about anyone in American politics today." (1) Who does Mr. Moyers talk with to get the impression that Americans don't take religion and moral responsibility very seriously any more? (2) Dare we suggest that readers send him their lists of politicians who have, and are, paying for their excesses? (3) In the culture wars of which he styles himself as the moderator, Mr. Moyers is manifestly a belligerent—on the wrong side, alas. (4) But then, he is, in the words of Joseph Campbell, "following his bliss," and he knows with dogmatic certitude that nobody else has a right to have a judgment about the rightness of that. (5) It is true, we tend to find the electronically ubiquitous Mr. Moyers an insufferable prig, especially when he is being so winsomely nostalgic about the "old values" to which we cannot return.

■ The Holy See's secretary for relations with states, Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, gave a major address at the United Nations a while back, and it touches on the debate over whether the Pope has jettisoned just war doctrine in favor of some kind of pacifism. "It is absolutely necessary to exhaust all the peaceful means which international law places at the disposal of all to find solutions worthy of man before unleashing a war of any kind," the Archbishop declared. "And it is necessary always to judge in conscience whether the evils which are to be created are proportional to the objectives for which a decision to fight is made." That, be it noted, is classical just war doctrine. Asked by a reporter whether the address was to be understood as a criticism of the UN role in the Gulf war, Tauran emphatically denied it. War is not inevitable, he said, but efforts for disarmament cannot succeed unless

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they are accompanied by progress in eliminating injustice and securing respect for human rights. In sum, war is a bad business but it may sometimes be required by justice.

■ In the great tradition of their founder, Ignatius Loyola, the Jesuits at the Campion Renewal Center in Weston, Mass., offer weekend retreats employing the "spiritual exercises" in updated form. There is, for instance, this: "THE BROADWAY MUSICAL AS A 'BROADWAY' OF PRAYING. The best of both prayer and the American Theatre celebrate what is real and life-affirming in the human experience. The spiritual exercise of listening to, and singing, our favorite songs often reflects our own dreams, joys, sorrows, and foibles. This weekend will present in a prayerful, and reflective, way some of the traditional and contemporary themes of Spirituality as they are found in the music of Broadway." The director of good feelings for this event, a Father Thomas J. Gallagher, appears to believe that Ignatius would agree that Christ of "Chorus Line" is a great improvement over Christ crucified. The "Enneagram" is big at the Campion retreat. The Enneagram is a Muslim Sufi teaching that analyzes nine different personality types and how to get in touch with your authentic self. There is also "Bio-Spirituality" for focusing on the signals your body is trying to send you. Like many other institutions, the Campion Center's literature says much about its being "Jesuit" and "Ignatian," but little about being Christian and nothing about being Catholic. Which suggests once again the urgent need for ecumenical dialogue on Jesuit-Christian relations.

■ The editorial director of Fortress Press, Marshall D. Johnson, didn't like our recent comment on the shambles of theological publishing. He is apparently quite proud of what they're doing at Fortress and sends along their new catalogue with the comment, "If you find in it significant works by liberationists, feminists, and deconstructionists, please call this to the attention of your readers." We don't know if the works are "significant," but the new catalogue abounds in books that reinforce our earlier comment, and that surely confirm folk in their hunch that they're not missing much by not reading current theology. The lead book in the catalogue is *From Apocalypse to Genesis: Ecology, Feminism, and Christianity* by Anne Primavesi, who teaches at Schumacher College in England and previously co-authored *Our God Has No Favorites: A Liberation Theology of the Eucharist.* The new work is described as "a compelling call to rethink theology in the light of ecological crisis." It leaves us uncompelled. Then there is *The Open Door* by Gerd Theisen of Heidelberg. "Gerd Theissen," we are told, "has produced yet another fresh and imaginative approach to understanding biblical texts and stories." Just what we needed, "yet another" fresh and imaginative approach. Ah, but this one really is different. The catalogue continues: "Traditional ways of understanding the Bible are challenged." Well, it's about time somebody did that, especially with a fresh and imaginative approach. And so it goes through the offerings of Fortress and most of contemporary theological publishing. There are outstanding exceptions. For instance, Carl Braaten's *No Other Gospel: Christianity Among the World's Religions,* which will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue. And H. Richard Niebuhr's *The Meaning of Revelation.* Of course the latter, now being reissued, was first published fifty years ago. Out of charity, we hesitate to mention *New Adam: The Future of Masculine Spirituality* by Philip Culbertson, a book that is sensitive to feminist insights and that will "help men to forge a new spiritual life that is more relational, caring, and creation-centered." There is also *After Nature's Revolt: Eco-Justice and Theology,* edited by Dieter T. Hessel, which promises to expose "Western social, economic, and technological patterns, even as it critiques Christian theology's own anthropocentrism." Suffice it that the political rectitude of today's theological guilds makes ordinary political correctness look downright, as Fortress might say, fresh and imaginative.

■ "Citizen Christians: Their Rights and Responsibilities" is a brief, vigorous, and thoroughly intelligent little tract by Dr. Richard D. Land, director of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention (901 Commerce, Nashville, Tennessee 37203). While tuned especially to Baptists, the argument is applicable across the denominational board. Readers might want to write for a copy and give it to their friends (and foes).

■ The Network Television Association is a high-minded outfit. Formed by the three networks to fight increasingly effective boycotts, the Association has sent a letter to thousands of advertisers and opinion makers solemnly pledging the networks' continuing devotion to the best in American values. According to the American Family Association, in a typical month this year the networks showed 164 depictions of sex outside marriage, carried programs including 407 references to premarital intercourse and 171 skin scenes. Here is a striking figure: 93 percent of the sex incidents depicted in network shows is extramarital. (Can you imagine what happens to the brains of the people who actually do the counting of all this stuff?) In any event, there are those who think what is happening on network television should not be dismissed lightly. Syndicated columnist Don Feder comments: "Television Sex is so lighthearted, so delightful, so free of unforeseen consequences. Unforeseen consequences? In 1988, 65.3 percent of adolescent births were out-of-wedlock, up from 29.5 percent in 1970. Each year, 2.5 million adolescents contract a sexually transmitted disease. Would

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condoms help? Doubtless, if they made them large enough to fit over television screens, thus obscuring the picture. . . . That the networks are dying a slow ratings death is a source of grim satisfaction, even if cable (with its nudity and graphic violence) will inherit the broadcast earth. In the meantime, as our society hurtles full throttle toward the abyss, network executives are stoking the engine."

■ The autobiography of Father Theodore Hesburgh (well, not quite "auto," since it was written "with Jerry Reedy") is titled *God, Country, Notre Dame* and is reportedly selling briskly. The dustjacket carries this blurb from the *Washington Post* review: "Fascinating . . . Engaging . . . The man is a wonder-worker, a Catholic version of Averell Harriman or George Ball—the man popes and presidents call upon when things get stuck." We would, in charity, like to think that Father Ted is not responsible for the dustjacket either.

■ Each year all the Catholic parishes in the country are asked to contribute to the Campaign for Human Development. The CHD budget last year was $9,820,000. *Organization Trends,* a publication of the Capital Research Center in Washington, D.C., has been tracing how the CHD money is used, and concludes that there is serious cause for concern. "The most important general criticism to be made," the study reports, "is that CHD funds so many projects that are directly political (and leftist) in nature. Expanding Communications to Empower Indian People of Fort Berthold ($33,000); Health Care for All ($30,000); Amnesty Farmworkers Organizing Project ($25,000); Campaign for Accessible Health Care ($40,000); or Build Homes Not Bombs ($20,000)." The authors are even more concerned, however, by what they view as CHD's undermining of Catholic social teaching as reflected, for instance, in Pope John Paul II's recent encyclical, *Centesimus Annus.* They write: "Not only are there few, if any, CHD-funded programs which encourage [the virtue of economic enterprise]; many of them exist to perpetuate precisely the opposite vice. Nowhere in CHD literature does one read of the need to start with the human heart, of the need for self-control, temperance, and a view toward the common good. Instead, one finds the political vocabulary of power, rights, and entitlement. This is even more tragic when one considers this admonition from *Centesimus Annus*: 'It is on this level [of teaching the aforementioned virtues] that the Church's specific and decisive contribution to true culture is to be found. The Church promotes those aspects of human behavior which favor a true culture of peace, as opposed to models in which the individual is lost in the crowd . . . and in which his greatness is posited in the arts of conflict and war.' Considering this dichotomy, it is not difficult to figure out which describes the Campaign for Human Development, whose philosophy is so roundly rejected in *Centesimus Annus.*" (For a copy of the October, 1991, report, write Capital Research Center, 1612 K Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20006)

■ The wisdom of "coming out of the closet" is a sometimes thing. It depends on what one is coming out about. Consider this little item by Matthew Parris in *The Spectator* (London): "I was telephoned from Australia this week by a friend who for years has been struggling with the question of whether to conceal his homosexuality. I have always urged him not to, assuring him the best people respect honesty, modern society in Britain is tolerant of every human type, one should be true to oneself, etc. He recently came to the same conclusion and acted upon it, so far without ill-effect. But he had not telephoned about that. 'Matt,' he said, joyously, 'I've become a Christian. I'm born again. I went to this evangelist's meeting and the Lord Jesus came to me. I wanted to tell you immediately. I want to tell everybody. I want to shout 'hallelujah!' All I could do was mumble, 'I'm pleased for you, Charlie.' Inwardly I thought, 'I hope he doesn't feel he has to tell everybody about it; it would be pretty embarrassing. At dinner parties, I mean aren't some things best kept to oneself?' and, out loud to him, I caught myself saying, 'It's a big step to announce this sort of thing, Charlie. You'll lose friends. You ought to think twice and maybe keep it to yourself. . . . ' "

Sources: Statistics on Evangelicals in *National Christian Reporter,* October 25, 1991. Charles Krauthammer on AIDS in nationally syndicated column, including New York *Daily News,* October 7, 1991. Linda Ellerbee on having it all, *New York Times,* March 15, 1991. Charles Moore on Gerard Manley Hopkins in *The Spectator,* 13 April 1991. Lynn Wardle on no-fault divorce in *Brigham Young University Law Review,* Volume 1991, No. 1. Richard McBrien quoted in *National Catholic Register,* October 6, 1991. Misspelling and miscalculation in Carnegie Council bulletin, Fall 1991. Robert Jenson on Carl Braaten, *dialog,* Autumn 1991. Boris Yeltsin quotation cited in *America,* October 19, 1991. Max Stackhouse comment on Protestantism in *Being Christian Today: An American Conversation,* forthcoming from Ethics and Public Policy Center, Washington, D.C. Joe Klein on Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., *New Republic,* November 11, 1991. Jimmy Carter remarks cited in *National Christian Reporter,* October 18, 1991. Peter Singer on the euthanasia debate, *The New York Review of Books,* August 15, 1991. On Lilly Endowment meeting, *National Christian Reporter,* October 18, 1991. Bill Moyers interview in *Washington Post Magazine,* September 1, 1991. Archbishop Tauran quoted by Catholic News Service, October 31, 1991. On Jesuits at the Campion Renewal Center, 1991-1992 bulletin from Campion Renewal Center. Matthew Parris on "coming out" in *The Spectator,* 10 August 1991.

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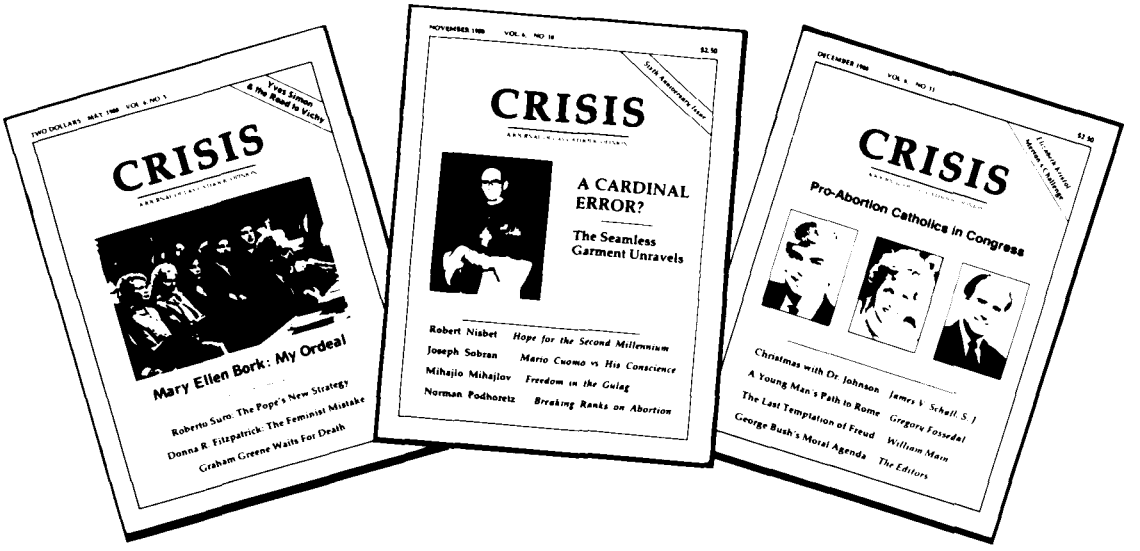

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